

# Confessions of a Teenage Viking

by Bardess of Avon

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Summary: Ruffnut-centric. "That was the summer that we started dragon training, me and my brother got tattoos, and Hiccup saved our entire village from the biggest enemy we would ever have. This is the story of that summer."

## 1. It Sucks to Be Me

A/N: Ruffnut Thorston has got to be my favorite character of anything ever. I knew I was in love with her when I walked away from my first viewing of How to Train Your Dragon; it was not long after receiving the DVD for my birthday that I knew I had to pay her a tribute of some kind. This fanfic you are reading now is that tribute. I have been working on this little baby since (according to Microsoft Word) January 19th, and I cannot tell you how excited (and nervous) I am to finally get it out of the secrecy of my computer and out into the open. It's taken numerous viewings of the movie, copious amounts of the soundtrack, and, towards the end, listening to the Tangled soundtrack on repeat for two days straight, and here it is: Confessions of a Teenage Viking.

This story is the movie told entirely through Ruffnut's perspective. It doesn't just focus on Ruffnut; she is actually telling the story. I've done my very best to stay in her voice, but that proved EXTREMELY difficult in some places; whereas I love to read and Ruffnut...doesn't...I'm always afraid I've either given her too strong a vocabulary or dumbed her down too much. So if her voice seems out of character, I sincerely apologize; I've worked my absolute hardest, but she's a difficult voice to master. On the subject of voice: since Ruffnut doesn't like to read, I highly doubt her grammar is correct much of the time. GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN THIS FIC ARE INTENTIONAL. Believe me, they pained me to write them more than they pain you to read them. Finally on the subject of voice, if swearing/pervy talk offends you, leave now. They are pubescent Vikings. It's going to happen.

So...yes. This chapter is more of an introduction than an actual chapter; the action picks up in the next installment, which should be coming this weekend. If you have any questions/comments/concerns/pointless trivia to share, please don't hesitate to review/PM me!

Enjoy!

Disclaimer: How to Train Your Dragon belongs to Cressida Cowell and DreamWorks Animation.

\* \* \*

><p>There are ten things majorly wrong with my life.<p>

1. I am a girl. I mean, that's enough to screw me over forever, so it's almost unnecessary to go into the next nine reasons. But I'm going to anyway.

2. I have a twin brother who thinks that because he is twenty-two minutes older than me and was born with a penis, he is automatically better than me. Also he thinks he's prettier. I'm not sure if agreeing to this last part is insulting him or not.

3. Even though I have the braids and the boobs (I mean, okay, so they're not a lot, but they're still there), people still confuse me with my twin brother.

4. My first kiss was with a girl. She says it doesn't count because we were practicing, but she was better than the first guy to ever put his lips on mine.

5. The first male I kissed was unconscious and to this day has no idea it happened. So I'm not sure if that actually counts or not.

6. The first conscious male I kissed was drunk and thought I was someone else.

7. After said male realized I was not Astrid, he threw up all over my boots.

8. When I was a kid, the other moms asked my mom to stop sending me over to play with their daughters because I was a "bad influence" (so I cut Thunderhigh's hair once, so what?). Instead, I had to play with losers like my brother, Astrid Hofferson (although she's not a loser, she's just kind of scary sometimes), Snotlout Jorgenson, Fishlegs Ingerman, and Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III. Nothing has changed; we are all still friends, and things are probably going to stay that way forever. There is no escape.

9. My friends are freaks. All of them.

And the top reason my life sucks?

10. I fell in love with the biggest loser on the island and lost him to the coolest girl on the island.

I know life is not fair. But sometimes I feel like it could be just a little less unfair.

My name is Ruffnut Thorston, and my life is not fair.

\* \* \*

><p>A hiccup is something small and annoying and really hard to get rid of. It's like, you just don't want it, you know? Yeah. That was Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III for you.<p>

Nobody liked Hiccup, except for maybe Gobber and Fishlegs, but they're both such freaks that their opinion doesn't count, and even Fishlegs stopped hanging out with him after a while. Hiccup was that kid nobody wanted to play with and none of the moms wanted their kids to play with, but we had to anyway because he was the chief's son, and you're probably not gonna move up in the ranks by shunning his only child. Except even Stoick realized his son was a threat to humanity. So while the rest of us were put on water-patrolâ€"meaning, we had to put out the fires from the dragon raids (did I mention we had dragon raids? Whatever, I'll get to that later)â€"Hiccup became Gobber's apprentice at the forge. I'm actually not really sure why they decided it would be a good idea to put Hiccup around sharp, dangerous objects, but at least he wasn't out there getting eaten by a dragon.

Basically, Hiccup was a loser, and I was one of the cool kids.

So it took me a while to figure out that I had a crush on the guy.

I don't actually know why I did. Do. Whatever. If I was gonna go for a guy (and lemme tell you, there aren't many guys to actually \_go for\_ in Berk), it would be a guy likeâ€"I dunno, Snotlout or something. Snotlout is Hiccup's cousin. They are nothing alike. Snotlout is tough and manly and, like, cool. Hiccupâ€"well. Maybe that's why I let Snotlout try to suck my face that one time he was drunk off his Friggin' ass and thought I was Astrid.

Um.

What was I talking about?

Oh yeah. My totally not-cool crush on Hiccup.

Normally I'd be like, "Shut up, I can do what I want," and I'd just punch anyone who laughed. Hey, it's worked for me so far. But this was \_Hiccup\_. Liking him was likeâ€"social \_suicide\_. I couldn't let anyone know I liked him unless

a. I was willing to be a social leper for possibly the rest of my life, or

b. I had such a bad-ass reputation that no one would dare question me.

I'm working on option b right now.

Anyone in Berk will tell you that Vikings have stubbornness issues, and it's completely true. I wanted Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, and nothing was gonna stop me from making him mine. I decided this the summer before I turned fifteen. That was the summer that my breastsâ€"small as they areâ€"finally decided to show up (although Astrid's were bigger, of course), we started dragon training, me and

my brother got tattoos, and Hiccup saved our entire village from the biggest (literally) enemy we would ever have.

This is the story of that summer.

## 2. This is Berk

A/N: If you are reading this, you are one of my favorite people because 1. you liked the first chapter of my Ruffnut homage well enough to move onto the second, for which I am eternally grateful, and 2. you take the time to read the author's notes, something an alarming number of the population does not do. So thank you very much!

Several people mentioned in their reviews that they noticed last chapter referenced my series of oneshots, *\_This is Berk\_* (which made me happy, because I honestly didn't think anyone remembered that, lol). This is true! If you would like the full account of Ruffnut's and Snotlout's first kiss (and it's a doozy), check out chapter two of *\_This is Berk\_*. *\_/end shameless self-plug/*

So, in regards to the Thorston family: the entire Thorston family tree I'm using, minus Tuffnut Sr., Tuffnut Jr., and Ruffnut, was invented by me. I AM IN NO WAY STATING THAT THIS IS CANON. The only non-canon character names I did not invent are Ragnhild, which is a traditional Norse name, and Bloodnut; kudos if you know what other DreamWorks movie I borrowed the name from! If you would like to use any of the names I invented, PLEASE ASK MY PERMISSION FIRST.

In regards to the accents: I am horrible at writing accents. I openly admit this. I've attempted to do the Viking burr justice, but I have a feeling I failed miserably. Basically, don't judge, because this is as good as it's going to get.

On a totally random (but not really) note: HARRY POTTER. THIS THURSDAY NIGHT. OMG. Holla if you are also dressing up and going to the midnight showing!

Huge thanks to the people who were kind enough to review a first chapter: **\*\*NinjaKangaroo, Raee, MWA220, BlindMaster, RockstarVikingAngel, ichthyosaurus, \*\*and \*\*Darned4AllEternity.\*\*** It truly means a lot!

Enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>"<em>Ruuuuuuffy<em>!"

Enter Tuffnut Thorston. Tall, blond, fourteen, and a pain in the ass. My brother.

I glared at him from where I'd been sharpening the spear Uncle Bloodnut had given me for my twelfth birthday. *"\_What\_"*

Tuff leaned against my doorframe after throwing the door open. He has this thing about not knocking, which is why when I change, I have to barricade the door. Because apparently walking in on me half-naked all the time didn't get the message through his thick head. "Mom and

Dad wanna talk to us."

I groaned. When both our parents wanna talk to us, it's usually about something serious, like our future, or having an intervention for Uncle Bloodnut and trying to convince him that trolls aren't drinking his ale while he's asleep. I dropped the spear and shoved past Tuff, making sure to push him out of my room. He pinched my rib and I slapped him before jumping down the stairs two at a time. "You rang?" I asked, plopping onto a chair facing my parents. I shoved Tuff when he tried to take my seat.

Dad smiled. My dad's a cool guy. He's one of Stoick's best men. When I turned thirteen, he sent me and Tuff to be on water-patrol. Water-patrol is where you run around with a giant barrel of water from the springs and throw buckets of it on the fire from dragon raids.

â€|did I mention we had dragon raids? Yeah. Ever since our ancestors came here, like, three hundred years ago, dragons had been attacking Berk, and everytime it looked like we were close to getting rid of them, more would show up. There were only four main species that ever came to Berk: Gronckles, huge dragons that look like stupid flying rocks; Deadly Nadders, which are like giant birds with poisonous darts in their tails; Hideous Zipplebacks, which are two-headed dragons that I secretly thought were kinda bad-ass; and Monstrous Nightmares, which can set themselves on fire. Sometimes we got Terrible Terrors, which are like dragon midgets, and every once in a while a Night Fury would show up. Except "show up" doesn't really fit, because no one ever actually saw a Night Furyâ€|just ducked for cover whenever we heard it coming. It never took food like the other dragons; it just blasted us from Odin-knew-where and destroyed anything in its path.

I looked at my mom and could tell that something cool was about to happen, because Mom always gets this constipated kind of look whenever she doesn't get her wayâ€|meaning, whenever I don't have to do something boring and girly. I wondered if they were getting me my very own sword like they promised they'd give Tuff as soon as he started fighting dragons; I hoped it was a Flashcutâ€|

"Ruffnut, Tuffnut, yer mother and I have been talkingâ€|" Dad looked at Mom. "â€|and due to the increasing number of attacks lately, we've decided that perhaps it's time yeh both start learning to fight dragons."

I stared. "Are you serious?" Fighting dragons was everything in Berk. You weren't worth anything unless you'd killed one.

Dad grinned. "Aye. Stoick spoke to me this morning, asked if I thought my children were ready to train. I said yes; I hope that's not a problem."

"Oh my gods, Dad, you totally rock!" Tuff shouted, jumping up and high-fiving me. "This is awesome!"

"We're gonna be Vikings!" I said, jumping onto his back. He ran around the room in circles, both of us screaming and shouting. Until the idiot ran into the wall. Seriously, how do you even miss that?

"Who else is training?" I asked, rubbing my head.

"Snotlout Jorgenson,"

No surprise there whatsoever.

"Fishlegs Ingerman,"

I raised my eyebrows at Tuff. Even though Fishlegs is the biggest member of our motley crew, he's probably the least aggressive. Of course, he is part-Berserk, so maybe fighting dragons would bring the warrior out in him.

"and Astrid Hofferson."

So basically everyone on water patrol.

I made a face. "Astrid's training with us? Oh, fantastic." It's not that I don't like Astrid, because I totally do. Hel, she's my sister from another mister, you know? When it's just the two of us, she's totally fun. We even kissed one time when we were twelve so we could have practice for when we were kissing, you know, boys. We have a bond, man. But. She tends to get really, really competitive in these kinds of things. I hate playing games with her because she freaks out if she doesn't win. She has this "I have to be the best" complex, and I knew that she was gonna be a total pain in the ass during dragon training.

"What's wrong with Astrid?" Dad asked.

"She's competitive," I said.

Tuff snorted.

"Oh, she can't be that bad," Dad said. "I'm sure she'll be just fine in training."

I stared at him.

"And if not, axe-related accidents happen all the time!"

"Tuffnut!" Mom scolded while me and Tuff roared with laughter.

Oh, right, the name thing. My brother was named after my dad; I guess you can only find so many names that end with "nut." See, my great-grandpa's name was Cuffnut, and he had a twin named Stoutnut. Cuffnut had twins named Gruffnut and Buffnut, and Gruffnut had three kids: my dad and his twin, Bloodnut, and the first girl for a few generations, Duffnut. "Nut" names are kind of a tradition; having twins is kind of a tradition too, I guess. Aunt Duffnut was killed in a dragon raid before I was born, so I never got to know her. My Uncle Bloodnut, on the other hand—

My Uncle Bloodnut is kind of like the village freak. He lives in his own little cabin by Madman's Gully.

—did I mention he was kind of a freak?

Uncle Bloodnut has tons of weapons and dragon claws and teeth and

other sharp things all over his cabin; now I know why my mom never wanted Tuff and me to go over there when we were kids. When we were really little, he gave me and Tuff dragon fangs that we still wear today. I like his cabin, and not just for the sharp stuff (although that's totally awesome too); sometimes it's nice to just get away from my family. Especially my mom. Uncle Bloodnut isn't my mom's biggest fan. He and my dad used to be best friends until Dad fell in love with Mom and married her; Uncle Bloodnut didn't like sharing my dad or whatever, so he built a cabin and moved away from the village.

Again, he's kind of a freak.

Mom and Dad thought I was gonna be a boy, so I was gonna be Bloodnut IIâ€"my parents have a thing about reusing names, apparently. Only I was a girl instead, and my parents decided that a girl probably shouldn't have the same name as a boy, because it was like a curse or something. I don't know. So they decided on Ruffnut.

"Aw, I'm just kidding," Dad said, but he winked at me anyway. "All right, I'm off to the hall; I'll be back fer dinner."

I can't really handle my mom when Dad isn't there, so I went back upstairs to finish sharpening my spear. I'd barely sat down when Tuff just strolled into the room. "Dude, I am so pumped for dragon training!"

I grinned. "Yeah." I turned back to my spear. "It'd be cooler if Astrid wasn't there, though," I mumbled.

Tuff flopped on my bed. "You're so jealous, it would be hilarious if it wasn't so pathetic."

My mouth actually came open. I mean, what do you say to that? "Shut up! I am not! Why would I be jealous of Astrid?"

"Wellâ€"because she's perfect. And you're, likeâ€" he waved his hands like he was trying to find the right word. "â€"not."

I huffed and dropped my spear on the bed. "I don't care if she's perfect; who'd want a perfect girl? Hiccup can have her, for all I care." I started to walk out of my room.

"Who said anything about Hiccup?" Tuff wanted to know.

Oh. Shit.

I turned around very casually. "Uh. What?"

Tuff looked like he had found a bunch of Bog-Burglars bathing or something. "Oh my gods, you like him, don't you?"

"Shut up, fart-face!" I shouted, feeling my face get hot. I love my brother, I do, but the guy can't keep a secret to save his life, and I just knew that he and Snotlout would have some laughs over this.

He started laughing really hard. "Ruffnut liiiiikes Hiccup! Ruffnut looooooves Hiccup! Ruffnut wants to huuug him, she wants to kiiiss him! Ruffnut wants to get rough withâ€" He stopped, praise

Odin. Then he looked sick. "Never mind that last part."

I kicked his shin. "Shut \_up\_!"

He snorted. "Why, don't want Hiccup to find out you like him? I don't blame you; I mean, I wouldn't want anyone in Berk to know I had a thing for that loser tooâ€"

We wrestled for a good ten minutes.

"If you tell anyone," I warned, pressing my hands against his neck.

Tuff gagged a little and tried to pull my hands off. "I won't, I won't!" When I let him go, he sat up and rubbed his neck. "You think I want anyone knowing my sister has a thing for \_Useless\_?"

"Shut \_up\_, Tuff!" I screamed, burying my head in my knees. "It's not like I'm \_happy\_ about it or anything!"

I'm pretty sure he tried to pat me on the back all comfortingly or whatever, but he did it so awkwardly that it felt more like he was swatting at a fly or something. "Well, you could do worse, I guess," he said in a very not-Tuff voice. "I mean, at least I don't have to worry about him, like, taking advantage of you or something."

"He wouldn't if I wanted him to," I said to my knees. "He likes \_Astrid\_."

"Yeah, but I mean, I'm pretty sure Astrid would pick, like, \_anyone\_ over him. Even Fishlegs. Or maybe even Gobber."

I didn't wanna think about that.

"Gross."

"I'm just saying, if Astrid's gonna go for a guy, it is \_not\_ gonna be Hiccup," Tuff pointed out.

I thought about it for a minute. He had a point; if she had to pick, Astrid would go for someone moreâ€|Vikingly. I felt a little better; at least I wouldn't have to worry about the competition.

"Did you know you have a zit in your eyebrow?"

Sometimes I wonder how I came out of the womb with him.

\* \* \*

><p>"Wake up!"<p>

I rolled over. "No." I'm pretty sure I was still asleep when I said that.

I sure woke up when Mom started shaking me, though. "There's an attack; get dressed quick as yeh can and get te the hall. Hurry!"

\_That\_ got me up. I jumped out of bed, pulling off my nightgown before both feet were on the floor. After a year of water patrol, I'd



learned to get dressed really fast in the dark. I was glad I'd left my braids inâ€"one less thing to get in the way. I ran out of my room while I was still pulling on my vest and crashed into Tuff, who was hopping into a boot.

"Watch where you're going, butt-elf!"

"Sorry I didn't have time to light a candle, troll!"

"Get up to the hall!" Mom screeched. She grabbed her sword in one hand and axe in the other and ran outside, shrieking. My mom is the only person I know who makes the Hooligan War Cry sound ladylike.

We grabbed the buckets by the door and sprinted to the hall, dodging other Vikings and burning houses on the way over. Astrid and Snotlout were already there, pulling the cart carrying the giant water barrel down the stairs. Fishlegs ran up a few minutes later; the barrel was a lot easier to handle when he was helping.

"Where to first?" I shouted as a Gronckle flew overhead.

"The forge," Astrid said. "If the weapons are destroyed, we're screwed."

My heart did a stupid little flip-flop. The forge. That was where Hiccup worked. I wondered if he'd be there tonight, helping Gobber. I wondered if he'd see me.

"All right, let's go!" she said, and we set down the barrel to fill up our buckets. Me and Tuff were trying to share a bucket, which was a really stupid ideaâ€"he went one way and I went the other. He finally tugged it out of my hands, so I went to get the other bucket and fill that up. I saw Astrid dump her water on a small fire that I could've stomped out, no problem; right after she put that one out, a Monstrous Nightmare burned down an entire house behind her.

Way to go, Astrid; you're saving the village one flame at a time.

We went to fill up our buckets again and decided to spread out; if we could take out the serious damage first, hopefully someone could stomp out the fires that wouldn't leave permanent damage. We had to pass the forge before we could spread out, and I saw Hiccup watching us out the window. I knew he was probably insanely jealous; I mean, who wouldn't be? We were out saving the village, and he was sharpening swords in a forge. I forced myself not to look at him; instead, I stuck out my chin and tried to look as cool as possible.

I mean, not that I needed to try or anything.

Tuff had run out of water and was stomping out a fire by the Duhbrain chicken coop when someone shouted, "Night Fury!"

Tuff and me dove for cover, trying to squint through the smoke to see it. Like that was gonna do us any good; no one had ever actually seen one clearly, and a couple of teenagers putting out fires weren't gonna be the first. And anyway, we couldn't see the sky overhead; it was all yellow smoke. I could tell by the dark blue on the edges of the island that it was almost morning. What an awesome way to start my day. Uh, not.

"C'mon, let's head back to the barrel," I said.

The fires had mostly gone out, and the ones that were still burning weren't gonna leave anyone homeless. We hadn't even made it to the barrel when we ran into the others. Astrid shook her head, flipping her fringe out of her eyes. "We're out of water, and by the time we make it to the spring and fill up the barrel, it'll be over."

"Hey, guys, check out Hiccup," Snotlout sniggered.

I was not surprised at all to see Hiccup screaming and running towards the main square with a Monstrous Nightmare chasing him. It would happen to him. I know I should probably sound a little more concerned, but it's Hiccup. He's been chased by more dragons than I can count on one hand. On both hands, actually. And sure enough, Stoick distracted it right before it snapped its jaws around Hiccup, and he managed to scare it off. Then, one of the enormous torches we used to keep out dragons fell over and crashed through several layers of the bridge leading to the docks—the shouts and crashes and sheep baaing was comforting.

Not.

Hiccup was standing all nervously in the square, so we knew that somehow, the torch falling over was his fault. The dragons that hadn't been scared off flew away with the livestock they'd caught. There was a long silence. Then everyone turned to stare at Hiccup.

He blinked. "Okay, but I hit a Night Fury."

"Didn't he hit one last time?" Tuff said, smirking.

"Only it was like, a tree?" I snickered.

"Hiccup's gonna diiiieeeee," Snotlout was singing under his breath; Stoick had Hiccup by the scruff of his neck and was half-walking, half-dragging him away.

"It's not like the last few times, Dad!" Hiccup was shouting. "I mean, I really actually hit it! You guys were busy and I had a very clear shot—it went down just off of Raven Point! Let's get a search party out there before it—"

"Stop!" Stoick bellowed. In a calmer voice he said, "Just. Stop. Every time yeh step outside, disaster follows. Can yeh not see that I have bigger problems? Winter is almost here and I have an entire village to feed!"

"Eh, well, between you and me, the village could do with a little less feeding, don'tcha think?" Hiccup suggested.

A few people gasped. I smirked.

"This isn't a joke, Hiccup!" Stoick snapped. "Ach, why can't you follow the simplest orders?"

"I, I, I can't stop myself—I see a dragon and I have to just—kill it." Hiccup made an awkward hand motion that I guess

was his idea of killing a dragon. "You know? It's who I am, Dad."

"Oh, you are many things, Hiccup," Stoick groaned, rubbing his forehead. "But a dragon killer is not one of them. Get back to the house." He looked up at Gobber and said in a louder voice, "Make sure he gets there. I have his mess to clean up."

Gobber smacked Hiccup upside the head. I leaned on Tuff's shoulder, laughing meanly.

"\_Quite\_ the performance," Tuff said as Hiccup walked past us. "I mean, that wasâ€"

I shoved him to shut him up without thinking about it as Snotlout said something to Hiccup. Then I froze. "Umâ€|"

Tuff looked like he was gonna shove me back, but then he smirkedâ€"he knew why I'd shoved him. "What was that, Ruff?"

I ignored him and turned to watch Hiccup walk away. "Thank you, thank you; I was trying, soâ€|" he said miserably.

Gobber shoved Snotlout and walked away.

"\_Ow\_!" Snotlout jerked his helmet back into place and tried to laugh it off, watching Astrid. "Soooâ€|"

"I guess we'd better fill up the barrel for next time," Astrid sighed, standing up.

"Ugh, I'm \_tired\_; can we just go back to \_bed\_?" Tuff groaned.

Astrid glared, putting a hand on her hip. "There could be another attack tonight; what happens if we don't have any water to put the fires out?" She didn't wait for an answer, just turned around and shook her head to get her fringe out of her eyes. Okay, confession time: the fringe is my fault. Astrid was complaining about her hair getting in the way, only she didn't want to cut it herself because she couldn't see what she was doing, so when she asked me to cut her hair, of course I was like, "Hel yes!" I cut off enough so that it wouldn't be \_too\_ noticeable, only I got distracted and accidentally sliced through her hair and gave her bangs at a weird angle (although she totally rocks the look, that bitch). I apologized over and over (although, again, she looks totally hot), but she still beat me up. Moral of the story: don't ever cut your best friend's hair.

Tuff crossed his eyes and imitated her in a high-pitched whisper, but he followed her anyway.

### 3. Welcome to Dragon Training

A/N: HARRY POTTER. OH MY WIZARD GOD. The movie was great; I think I would've enjoyed it more if my audience hadn't consisted of horny teenage boys who didn't even read the books and were only there to pick up girls (hint: didn't happen), and if the movie hadn't cut out twice, leading to me missing a good twenty to thirty minutes of the movie, BUT OTHER THAN THAT, I really liked it. And yes, I did dress

up, radish earrings and all.

Gigantic thanks to \*\*MWA220, ichthyosaurus, Hicc, xv323, u r awesome, 123NinjaKat,\*\* and \*\*RockstarVikingAngel\*\* for reviewing; I less than three all of you!

Enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>When the water barrel had been filled and put back in Mead Hall, I flopped down on my bed with my boots still on. I was tired as <em>Hel</em> now that I wasn't running around trying to save the village, and I was gonna take a nap, and nobody was gonna stop me.

"Ruff?"

Except for my dad.

I opened one eye. "Hmph?"

He sat down on the bed beside me and rubbed my back with his massive hand. "Stoick's going to Helheim's Gate to find the dragon's nest this afternoon."

I shut my eye. "That's nice." I was exhausted, I was in my bed, and my dad was rubbing my back. You try staying awake through that.

"I'm going with him."

Um. What? I rolled onto my side and propped myself up on my elbow. "What?"

He sighed. "He's hoping that if we find the nest, we can kill them all or at least scare them off so that they'll find another nest and stop attacking us."

I'm not an idiot; I'd heard the stories about what happened to the Vikings who went looking for the nest. "But Dad, most ships never come back."

He smiled. "We're Vikings; it's an occupational hazard."

I rolled my eyes; that was the excuse every Viking used for anything dangerous. And somehow, whenever me and Tuff tried to use it to do something dangerous, Mom never thought it was a good enough excuseâ€¦  
"Dadâ€œ"

"We shouldn't be gone more than a fortnight."

"You could be gone forever."

"Ah, my daughter; ever the optimist." Dad tugged on my braid. "I know it's a lot to ask, but I'll need you and your brother to mind yer mother while I'm away."

"Joy."

"And I'll also need you and yer brother te try te get along."

"Double joy."

"And if you feel like you're about te kill someone, you can go visit yer Uncle Bloodnut; he's staying here te hunt."

I perked up. "Can I stay with him?"

Dad laughed. "You know your mother would kill me if I said yes te that. Besides, he'll be busy hunting most of the day; he can't watch you and build up a food supply at the same time."

"I could help him; he took me and Tuff hunting that one winter, remember?" I reminded him. When we were ten, Dad let us spend a week with Uncle Bloodnut so that he could teach us the "finer points" of hunting. I found out I'm a pretty good shot with a bow and arrow. My brother is not. Nyah.

Dad shook his head. "You'll be so busy with dragon training that I doubt you'll have time to get annoyed by yer mother."

I sat up straight. "Dragon training?"

He grinned. "Aye; your first lesson is tomorrow."

I grinned back. "Who's teaching us?"

"Gobber."

I made a face. "Sure, Dad, have the man missing two limbs teach us how to survive a dragon attack."

He tugged on my braid again. "Gobber's a lot smarter than you think; he knows more about dragons than most of the men on this island. You're lucky te be learning from him."

I sighed dramatically. "I \_guess\_ I can survive."

Dad rolled his eyes. "Thank you." He stood up. "I'm going te tell yer brother and then I'll be off; \_try\_ and behave while I'm away."

"Define 'behave.'"

He kissed my head. "Make me proud while I'm away."

I hugged him. "When you come back, I'll be the most badass dragon killer \_ever\_."

He grinned. "I know you will."

When he left, I lay back down and stared at the ceiling. I was still tired, but I couldn't go back to sleep. On the one hand, Dad was skipping off on a mission that most Vikings never returned from. On the other, I was starting \_dragon training\_. Is it bad that I was more excited than worried? Dragon training was like...the portal into \_adulthood\_. If you passed, you were a \_real\_ Viking.

I sat straight up; I had an idea. A brilliant idea. A master-plan. I was gonna become an awesome Viking and dragon-slayer. I wasn't gonna be the best or anythingâ€"are you kidding? No way in Hel Astrid was gonna let that happenâ€"but I was gonna be pretty damn impressive, so much so that any guy would be honored for me to like him. Like, he would go, "Oh, dudes, Ruffnut totally digs me!" And his buddies would be all, "You're insane, man, Ruffnut would never like you, she's just too awesome." But I wasn't gonna go for just any guyâ€"I was gonna go for Hiccup. And let's face it, a kick-ass dragon-slayer like me would just be too good for a loser like Hiccup to ask for. Which is why he couldn't turn me down. How could he?

I flopped back against the pillows, grinning. Operation Win Hiccup: effective tomorrow.

\* \* \*

><p>When me and Tuff got to the kill ring the next morning, the others were already there.<p>

"'Sup, Double-Menace?" Snotlout said, doing that stupid head-jerking thing guys do when they say hi. Seriously, how do they not get whiplash from that?

"Nothing much; I'm just gonna kick your ass at dragon killing," Tuff said, puffing out his chest.

"Clearly I am going to kick both your asses," I said, flipping my braids over my shoulders.

"In what world, butt-braids?" Tuff snorted. I kicked him.

Gobber finally limped up to the ring. "Ah, glad to see you all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed!"

"What does that even mean?" Tuff whispered.

Gobber moved down the ramp and threw up the gate. "Welcome to dragon training!"

Astrid said something like, "No turning back." Like, who would even turn back from dragon training?

We moved into the ring, looking around. We'd all seen it from the outside plenty of times, but this was the first time any of us had actually been inside it. It was an awesome feeling.

"I hope I get some serious burns!" Tuff said.

"I'm hoping for some mauling," I said. "Like on my shoulder or lower back." Those scars would be sexy as Hel, let me tell you.

"Yeah," Astrid said, sounding only half-impressed. She seemed pretty chill right nowâ€"I hoped it would last. "It's only fun if you get a scar out of it."

"Yeah, no kidding, right?"

We all turned around to see Hiccup. My heart did that really stupid

flip-flop thing again. Hiccup was \_here\_. In \_dragon training\_.

"Pain; love it," he said sarcastically. He was carrying an axe that was way too huge for him.

"Oh, \_great\_," Tuff groaned. "Who let \_him\_ in?"

I had to remember to pretend I didn't like Hiccup.

"Let's get started!" Gobber said. "The recruit who does best will win the honor of killing his first dragon in front of the entire village!"

Before I could say, "Who says it's gonna be a he?" because seriously, sexist much? Snotlout said, "Hiccup already killed a Night Fury, sooo, does that disqualify him, orâ€|?"

Me and Tuff laughed.

"Can I transfer to the class with the \_cool\_ Vikings?" Tuff asked as we all stood in line. "I mean, who do I talk to about that?"

"If you could, it wouldn't be the class with the \_cool\_ Vikings anymore," I said.

He reached for my braids and I danced out of his grip, landing between Astrid and Snotlout. Tuff held two fingers up to his eyes and then pointed them at me. "You better watch your back, sis."

"I'm shaking in my boots," I said, rolling my eyes.

"Behind these doors are just a few of the many species you will learn to fight!" Gobber said, moving to the huge doors. "The Deadly Nadderâ€|"

"Speed eight, armor sixteen," Fishlegs said. I think that was the most excited I had ever heard him get over anything.

"The Hideous Zipplebackâ€|"

"Plus eleven stealth, times two."

"The Monstrous Nightmareâ€|"

"Firepower fifteen."

"The Terrible Terrorâ€|"

"Attack eight, venom twelve!"

"\_Can you stop that\_?" Gobber bellowed at Fishlegs, doing us all a favor. He rolled his eyes. "And, the Gronckle."

"Jaw strength eight," Fishlegs whispered.

"Whoa, whoa, wait!" Snotlout said, jumping forward. "Aren't you gonna teach us first?"

My eyes got wide. Was Gobber \_seriously\_ gonna unleash a dragon on us

before we'd learned anything?

"I believe in learning on the job," Gobber said all calmly, tugging on the lever.

Yes. Yes, apparently, he was going to unleash a dragon on us before we'd learned anything. The Gronckle flew out of its cage, and everyone went running.

"Today is about survival! If you get blasted, you're dead," Gobber said cheerfully. Well. That was encouraging. "Quick, what's the first thing you're going to need?"

"A doctor?" Hiccup suggested.

"Plus five speed?" Fishlegs wondered.

"A shield," Astrid said.

"Shields, go!" Gobber agreed. "Your most important piece of equipment is your shield. If you must make a choice between a sword or a shield, take the shield!"

Me and Tuff ran up to a bunch of shields lying on the ground and reached for the same one. "Get your hands off my shield!" Tuff snapped, tugging on the shield.

"There's like a million shields!" I pointed out, tugging on it too.

"Take that one, it has a flower on it; girls like flowers."

I jerked the shield out of his hands and bashed him over the head with it. "Oops; now this one has blood on it."

Tuff grabbed the shield and started tugging on it again—"until the Gronckle blasted it and sent us both spinning to the ground.

"Tuffnut, Ruffnut, you're out!"

"What?" we asked at the same time.

Wow. Way to impress Hiccup. We gave each other a look before dragging ourselves to the side as Gobber kept talking. "Those shields are good for another thing—"noise. Make lots of it to throw off a dragon's aim! All dragons have a limited number of shots—"how many does a Gronckle have?"

"Five?" Snotlout tried.

"No, six!" Fishlegs said.

"Correct, six!" Gobber said happily. "That's one for each of you!" The Gronckle blasted at Fishlegs, who yelled and ran away. "Fishlegs, out! Hiccup, get in there! Snotlout, you're done! One shot left!" One by one, Fishlegs, Snotlout, and Astrid all joined me and Tuff until Hiccup was the only one left. He ended up with his back to the wall and the Gronckle right in front of him. I watched with wide eyes, but Gobber hooked his interchangeable hand in its mouth and jerked it



away so that the shot just missed Hiccup.

"And that's six. Go back te bed, ye overgrown sausage!" Gobber snapped, swinging the Gronckle back into its cage. He dropped the pin in the door. "You'll get another chance, don't you worry. Remember: a dragon will always, \_always\_ go for the kill." He looked around. "Class dismissed. Remember, we're meeting up at Mead Hall for dinner tonight; be ready to talk about your mistakes in the ring today!"

I groaned and followed the others out of the ring.

"He's a \_nut\_," Snotlout muttered. "What in the name of Odin's saggy left ball was he \_thinking\_, letting a dragon loose on us like that?"

"I thought it was a good experience," Astrid said, flipping her fringe out of her eyes. "You'll never learn if you don't get out there and do it."

"Says the girl who ran away," I pointed out.

She glared at me.

"I still say he's crazy," Snotlout muttered.

And speaking of crazyâ€¦ "You guys go ahead; I'm gonna visit my uncle," I said; Uncle Bloodnut didn't live too far from the kill ring.

"Yeah, me too," Tuff agreed. The others moved on and me and Tuff headed to the right. "I still can't believe we were the first ones out," Tuff complained, stepping over a log. "I mean, seriously, even \_Hiccup\_ stayed in the ring longer than we did!"

"He stayed in longer than anyone did," I pointed out.

We came to Uncle Bloodnut's front door and banged on it. "Who's there?" he shouted from inside.

"Draugr to collect your \_soul\_," Tuff rasped.

The door swung open and Uncle Bloodnut grinned beneath his enormous beard. "Well, if it isn't Berk's greatest dragon killers!" he boomed (my uncle doesn't talk, he \_booms\_), pulling us both into one of his hugs that almost breaks your bones. "Come in, come in, and tell me all about your first lesson!"

"Gobber is batshit, for serious," Tuff whined, dropping into a chair. He yelped and pulled a bear jaw out of the seat.

"So I'm guessing he went with the 'learning on the job' approach?"

"Ugh, yes," I groaned, taking a seat that didn't have something sharp and spiky in it. "Which would've been okay if we weren't facing a \_Gronckle\_."

"So who all is in your class?" Uncle Bloodnut wanted to know, pouring us some ale. Yeah, my uncle gives fourteen-year-olds ale, so what? He's the most bad-ass uncle ever, even if he is off his damn

rocker.

"Astrid Hofferson, Snotlout Jorgenson, Fishlegs Ingerman, and Hiccup Haddock," I said, ticking them off on my fingers.

Uncle Bloodnut raised his eyebrows. "Stoick's boy?"

"The very same," Tuff confirmed, taking a swig.

"How did that go?"

"The usual: chaos, anarchy, lots of fire," I said in a bored voice.

"Ruff has a crush on him," Tuff announced.

I glared at him. "Tuff!"

Uncle Bloodnut practically howled with laughter. "And they call me crazy!"

I dropped my head onto my arm. "Please stop talking."

"Ah, it's all right, lass; you could do worse," he said, patting my back. "At least you won't have to worry about the competition, eh?"

"You can say that again," Tuff sniggered.

"You've got a right good shot," Uncle Bloodnut continued. "He's not in much of a position to turn yeh down, is he?"

"I appreciate the words of comfort," I snapped, "but can we please just stop talking about it?"

"I think it's that time of the month," Tuff whispered loudly.

I punched him.

"Oh, all right," Uncle Bloodnut agreed. "How's about some weed rat stew?"

Me and Tuff gave each other worried looks—"we'd eaten Uncle Bloodnut's weed rat stew before, and our stomachs weren't about to forget it anytime soon. I casually stretched and stood up. "You know, we really have to go," I said in a gee-what-a-shame kind of voice.

"Yeah—you know how Mom is," Tuff agreed, also standing up.

Uncle Bloodnut looked disappointed. "Aye, I suppose I do."

"We'll stop by tomorrow," I promised.

"All right; see yeh later!" Uncle Bloodnut said as we headed out the door.

"Bye!" we threw over our shoulders.

"Thank Odin," Tuff muttered when we were out of earshot. "I already

almost died once today, thanks."

"I know, right?" I looked up at the sky. "Think it's gonna rain tonight?"

Tuff looked up and made a face. "It better not."

#### 4. Blind Spot

A/N: It's Saturday; time for an update! So, a few things (not all of which necessarily pertain to this fic): 1. I've noticed that in fics where I'm novelizing a movie, my writing tends to get a bit...suckish, I guess? around the parts taken directly from the movie, and it gets better during scenes I've invented. So this chapter, which is taken almost entirely from the movie...is a bit on the suckish side. Just FYI. 2. The second chapter of **\*\*I am Number 5\*\***'s fic, I Am Number 5's Fanfiction Reviews, in which she and various cartoon characters (including Ruffnut) review various fanfics, reviews this fanfic, and it reveived an overall score of 55/60! I highly recommend reading it; it involves my soulmate and Ruffnut reviewing fanfiction, which is quite an epic combination, if you ask me. 3. Christmas in July is on Monday! Everyone break out the Christmas movies and Santa hats and sing your favorite Christmas songs all day! 4. On a much more somber note, Amy Winehouse was found dead today. She was a musical icon and she will be greatly missed. Back to Black, Amy.

On THAT depressing note, I want to thank my reviewers for taking the time to share their thoughts, which mean more to me than I can say: so thank you **\*\*MWA220**, Catnip-Packet, RockstarVikingAngel, Bookworml81, ichthyosaurus, u r awesome,\*\* and **\*\*123NinjaKat.\*\*** And because I never forget my anonymous reviewers:

**\*\*Bookworml81:\*\*** Thank you very much! Heh, well, I would like that very much too-as, I'm sure, would Ruffnut. XD Thanks for the review!

**\*\*123NinjaKat:\*\*** Gwa, thank you! Haha, I think Mr. and Mrs. Thorston would kill themselves if any more young were added to the Thorston litter. XD I've never logged in on an iPod, but considering I'm too lazy to even charge mine, I don't blame you for not wanting to login on one. XD Thank you so much for the awesome review!

And now, without any further ado, enjoy! (I hope.)

\* \* \*

><p>By the time we made it to Mead Hall for supper, the rain was already coming down hard. Astrid, Snotlout, Fishlegs, and Gobber were already there.<p>

"Where's Hiccup?" I asked when me and Tuff sat down. Tuff smirked at me and I hoped no one saw me turn red. "I mean, I only noticed because it's been like five seconds and nothing's broken yet," I said all nonchalantly.

Snotlout and Tuffnut sniggered.

"He'll be along," Gobber said, giving us a Lookâ€"he loved Hiccup and

was always sticking up for him since no one else would, I guess.  
"Let's get back to the lesson. All of you made mistakes today because you're rookies; you can only learn to do the right thing by learning what you did \_wrong\_."

I'm telling you, he's batshit.

He must've seen me roll my eyes, because just then he said, "Who can tell me where Ruffnut went wrong in the ring today?"

I glared at him.

"She tried to take my shield," Tuffnut whined. I shoved his face into his plate.

"There were like a million shields!" I snapped at him. "If you'd just let me \_take\_ the stupid thing, we wouldn't have gotten blasted!"

"That's both of your problem right there," Gobber interrupted. "You were too busy fighting with \_each other\_ to fight the \_Gronckle\_. Any enemy can be defeated when facing a united front."

"Good luck with that happening with those two," Snotlout sniggered.

"Where did Snotlout go wrong?" Gobber asked loudly.

"He was too busy flirting," I said.

"He wasn't focused," Astrid volunteered.

"Exactly," Gobber agreed. "Yeh can't let yer attention slip when you're facing a dragon; you turn yer head for one second, and it could be the last thing you see."

We stared. Thank you for that, creepy man.

"What about Fishlegs?" he continued.

"Oh, I know where I went wrong," Fishlegs said sadly. "Even though its shot limit is six with a firepower of only seven and a jaw strength of eight, it has an aim of three, which you would think makes it harmless, but the fact that it has horrible aim makes it \_more\_ dangerous because everything is its target, you know? And then it has an armor of nineteen, so it's almost impossible to do any damage with retaliation. I didn't stand a \_chance\_."

We all stared at him for a long minute.

"I think my brain just broke," Tuff whispered.

"â€|all right," Gobber said after an awkward pause. "Where did Astrid go wrong in the ring today?"

"I mistimed my somersault dive; it was sloppy. It threw off my reverse tumble," Astrid sighed.

"Yeah, we noticed," I said sarcastically; like \_anyone\_ was paying attention to the one thing she didn't do perfect. She gave me a look

and I winked; she rolled her eyes and smiled.

"No, no, you were great; that was so 'Astrid'!" Snotlout said. The look on his face totally grossed me out, so I rested my head on my hand and turned to the side, rolling my eyes. My heart did that stupid flip-flop thing when I realized a very wet Hiccup was heading towards the table. He reached forward to grab a plate and I sucked in a breathâ€”he was so close to me. I hoped no one else noticedâ€”|

One look at Tuff told me that somebody had noticed.

"She's right," Gobber was saying. "You have to be hard on yourselves! Where did Hiccup go wrong?"

I made myself smirkâ€”I couldn't let him know. "Uh, he showed up?" To be honest, Hiccup had gone the least wrong in the ring today; he'd managed to stay in longer than any of us.

"He didn't get eaten," Tuff sniggered as Hiccup moved past us and sat down at the other table. He gave me a lookâ€”I could tell he was gonna laugh his ass off at me later.

"He's never where he should be," Astrid said, her voice sounding way cold.

"Thank you, Astrid." Gobber rapped me on the back of the head and I let out a shout; he was a little harder on Tuff, who just rubbed his head and scowled. "You need to live and breathe this stuff." He pulled a book out from his back and threw it onto the table. "The Dragon Manual. Everything we know about every dragon we know of."

Tuff stuck the point of his knife into the table; I stared at it, waiting for it to fall over.

"No attacks tonight; study up," Gobber said, limping out of the hall.

"Wait," Tuff said in a panicked voice, letting the knife drop. "You mean read?"

"While we're still alive?" I stared at my plate like it would tell me it was okay, I didn't have to read after all. Seriously, Vikings don't read. We kill things. You can't kill words; they kill your brain.

"Why read words when you can just kill the stuff the words tell you stuff about?" Snotlout wanted to know, thumping his fist on the table.

"Oh, I've read it, like, seven times!" Fishlegs said excitedly. No. Surprise. There. "There's this water dragon that sprays boiling water at your face!" I felt my brain breaking a little bit. "And, and there's this other one, that buries itself for like, a weekâ€”"

"Yeah, that sounds great," Tuff interrupted, making a shutting up motion with his hand. "There was a chance I was gonna read that." He leaned back on his hands.

"But, now?" I droned, shrugging. It sounded even more boring than before. And like it had a lot of words. I don't like words.

"\_You\_ guys read; \_I'll\_ go kill stuff," Snotlout said, getting up and heading out.

"And there's this other one," Fishlegs was saying, following Snotlout, "that has spines like trees"

I was about to get up when Tuff shoved my head into the table.

"Hey!" I snapped, getting up.

"What?" he challenged, his hands open like "so kill me." I was really tempted to.

"\_Don't\_ touch my helmet," I growled.

"Psh, whatever," he said, rolling his eyes.

"so you guys don't have to worry about anything while I'm around," Fishlegs was saying. "I can just tell you about all the dragons!"

"Oh, that sounds fun," I said, blinking. Um, \_not\_.

Astrid caught up with us just outside. "Mm, I was thinking of taking a swim today," she said sarcastically, taking off.

"Want me to walk you back?" Snotlout shouted after her, but she was already gone. He pouted. "I'm just not in my game today."

"Are you ever?" I snorted.

He scowled. "I'll see you tomorrow," he grumbled, stomping out into the rain.

"So, uh, do you guys want me to summarize the Dragon Manual for you?" Fishlegs asked.

Me and Tuff looked at each other. Tuff stretched and yawned. "Oh, \_gee\_, look at the time; it's almost time for bed!"

"Oh, \_yeah\_, " I agreed, also letting out a huge yawn. "I should get to bed or something."

"Yeah, me too," Tuff said. He clapped Fishlegs on the arm. "We'll catch ya later, Legs."

I didn't hear what Fishlegs said after that because we both took off.

\* \* \*

><p>When we got to the ring the next day, there was a big-ass maze all over the place.<p>

"Um, are we supposed to go through the maze and find a dragon at the

end?" Tuff asked, poking one of the ginormous boards with his spear.

"Is killing it our prize?" Snotlout asked excitedly.

"I'd like te see you try," Gobber snorted. "Today, you'll be facing the Deadly Nadder!"

"Ooh!" Fishlegs said. He was practically dancing. "The Deadly Nadder is one of the most venomous dragons alive because of the quills on its tail!"

"This isn't a maze; these are barriers," Astrid realized.

Gobber grinned. "Aye! You'll be using the barriers today te hide and learn to attack from a safe location."

"And where will you be?" Hiccup wanted to know.

I didn't like the look on Gobber's face. "I'll be watching."

"You're leaving us alone with a dragon?" Snotlout yelped.

"Don't you remember, Lout? We're learning on the job\_," Tuff said, totally mangling Gobber's burr.

Instead of getting mad, Gobber nodded. "Aye, that's exactly what you're doing. Spread out and get ready!"

I stayed close to Tuffâ€if I was going down, so was he. We heard the door open and then the Nadder screeching. We kept moving; we weren't really sure where we were going, but it was better than just sitting around and waiting for it to, you know, kill us. Gobber kept shouting completely unhelpful words of advice from where he was leaning against the bars, and I could hear Hiccup going on and on to Gobber about dragons or something and Snotlout trying to chat up Astrid.

"Focus, Hiccup! You're not even trying!" Gobber shouted after a long time of me hearing nothing but Hiccup's voice. "Today is all about attack! Nadders are quick and light on their feet; your job is to be quicker and lighter!"

"Easy for him to say," I grunted, following Tuff. "Sitting up there and watching."

Fishlegs shouted from a wall not far from us, "I'm really beginning to question your teaching methods!"

"Look for its blind spot!" Gobber said for what felt like the fifty millionth time\_. "Every dragon has one! Find it, hide in it, and strike."

Just then me and Tuff ran right into the Nadder. I stared at it for a minute, waiting for it to eat us, but then we figured out that we were in its blind spotâ€it couldn't see us. We kept right on its nose, making sure that no matter which direction it tried, it couldn't see us. I got a whiff of something nasty and took a huge sniffâ€it was my brother. I gagged. "Do you ever bathe?" I shoved my shield on his back, trying to create a barrier between usâ€gods,

how does anyone live with that kind of B.O.?

"You don't like it, just get your own blind spot," Tuff snapped, shoving me back.

I yanked him around. "How about I give you one?" I snapped back, knocking my helmet into his. He pushed back, but just then we remembered that, you know, there was a Deadly Nadder right beside us, and we weren't in its blind spot anymore. I grabbed Tuff just before it shot at us and yanked him to the side.

"Blind spot? Yes. Deaf spot? Not so much," Gobber chuckled.

"Way to almost get us killed, butt-elf!" I hissed. Hiccup and Gobber were saying something else, but I wasn't paying attention.

"It's not my fault!" Tuff sputtered. "You're the one who made such a big deal about how I smell!"

"Because it's terrible," I scoffed. "Seriously, bro, you smell worse than Gobber."

"Well, I'm sorry I can't smell as wonderful as Hiccup!"

I slapped a hand over his mouth. "Shh!" I hissed, looking around with wide eyesâ€"oh please, Odin, Frigg, Freya, and Thor, don't let Hiccup have heard.

Tuff was actually sniggering, the idiot! "Did I hit a nerve?"

"I'm gonna hit more than your nerves if you don't shut up!" I snapped.

Tuff actually pranced. Like a little girl. "Hiccup and Ruffnut, sittin' in a tree," he sang, making a dainty twirl.

Before I could stab him, Fishlegs rounded the corner. "Oh, are you practicing a ceremonial dance?" he asked all excited. "I'm not familiar with this one, thoughâ€"is it only specific to Nadders?"

"I understood maybe three words of that," I snorted. Some of the barriers were starting to fallâ€"if we didn't move, the Nadder could find us. "Let's go!" The three of us took off around the outer edge where we were less likely to get trampled; I passed by Hiccup and tried to pull him with us, since he was just standing there and talking to Gobber, but all I ended up doing was banging into his shield.

"Hiccup!" Astrid yelled. The barrier nearby came down, and me and Tuff ducked for cover. When the dust cleared, I could see Astrid lying flat on Hiccup. She didn't look happy.

"Ooh, love on the battlefield!" Tuff teased. Even though Astrid looked pissed as Hel and Hiccup looked like he was in pain, I couldn't help feeling jealousâ€"I mean, hello, my best friend was lying on top of the guy that I had a major crush on.

Still, I couldn't let anyone know that I had a major crush on him, so I played it off like I thought it was funny. "She could do better," I said, loud enough for both of them to hear. Fishlegs and



Snotlout crawled out of the heap of boards, panting hard. Astrid was trying to pull her axe out of Hiccup's shield, where it had gotten stuck, and Hiccup was trying to help, but of course Astrid wasn't listening. She finally stuck her foot on his face and pulled; he let go of the shield (I thought he'd broken his arm, but somehow he was okay) and she swung the connected weapons at the Nadder. The shield broke off against the Nadder, who shrieked and ran back to its cage. The dragon had been taken downâ€”class was over.

"Well done, Astrid!" Gobber said from above, baiting the Nadder back into its cage.

Astrid completely ignored him, like she does most of the time if you compliment her. Instead, she whirled on Hiccup, who was still huddled on the ground. He looked so pathetic and so helpless, I just wanted to snuggle him forever.

â€”um. Forget I said that.

Um. Anyway. Yes.

"Is this some kind of a joke to you?" Astrid snapped at Hiccup, pointing her axe in his face. "Our parents' war is about to become ours; figure out which side you're on!"

Um, okay, I'm sorry: Astrid is my best friend and all, but the girl has her bitchy moments. And that? That was some of the bitchiest I've ever seen her. I really wanted to tell her off, or at least stop her and be like, "That shit is not cool," but then she'd want to know why I was defending Hiccup the Useless against her, and then I would have to tell her, and somehow, I got the feeling Astrid wouldn't be all happy and girly for me like most best friends would. So I waited until I could rant to someone I knew I could trust.

\* \* \*

><p>"â€”none of us were doing good in the ring; it was her own damn fault she fell on him!" I said, waving my arms. "And then she yelled at him for picking the wrong side. What, like he's gonna go set up camp with the dragons now?" I snorted. "I'm telling you, something crawled up her ass and died."

"Ah, well, that sometimes happens," Uncle Bloodnut said wisely.

"I mean, she was really hard on him, yeah," Tuff agreed. "But I mean, it's Astrid. She would've bitched like that at anyone she fell on." He sniggered. "Plus I think she was pissed she landed like that on top of Hiccup." He gave me a look I really didn't like. "Of course, I don't think you were too happy with that development either, sis."

"You're not gonna be too happy with the development of my fist in your face if you don't can it," I snapped.

"Ruffnut and Hiccup, sittin' in a tree!" Tuff sang, dancing around the cabin. "K-I-S-S-I-N-G!"

I threw a frying pan at him; it hit him in the head and he yelped.

"Speaking of which, any news on that front?" Uncle Bloodnut asked like nothing had happened.

I rolled my eyes. "I wish." My plan to impress Hiccup was failing majorly; I think my only saving grace was the fact that no matter how much I sucked, I knew he was always going to suck a little more.

"You could've used today to your advantage," Uncle Bloodnut pointed out. "Talked to him after class, told him you thought Astrid was being unfair."

I stared. "But then everyone would know I was nice to him."

"Won't they know eventually?" he asked.

I shrugged. "Yeah, but by then I'll be so bad-ass they'll be too scared to question me."

Tuff snorted. "In what \_world\_, Ruff?"

I held up the frying pan I'd used earlier. "I will use this again."

## 5. A Dragonesque Figure

A/N: Hello, my lovelies! How are you this fine Saturday? There's not a whole lot to say this week; much of this chapter takes place during the movie, with a few scenes of my own invention added to the mix, and we'll get to see how Ruffnut's tattoo came to be. Also, endless snaps to anyone who knows where I got the insult "turkey-tit" (but no cheating and Googling it!).

My endless thanks to \*\*Catnip-Packet, MWA220, 123NinjaKat, TemariTheWolf, Hicc, RockstarVikingAngel, draco-x, \*\*and \*\*ShadowOne\*\* for their kind reviews, and to respond to my anonymous reviewers:

\*\*123NinjaKat:\*\* FFN's been doing that a lot lately, even with logged-in reviewers, I've noticed. D'aww, thank you! Don't worry, I am NOT going to quit halfway through this, or at any point through this; the story's already been completed to ensure that not happening. :) Thanks so much for reviewing!

\*\*draco-x:\*\* Thank you very much!

\*\*ShadowOne:\*\* Thank you so much! Will definitely keep updating!

Enjoy, my lovelies!

\* \* \*

><p>We all met up at one of the watchtowers that night. Gobber had a fire going and had brought some chickens for us to roast. Hiccup was sitting at the end of the bench closest to the stairs and there was an open space between him and Snotlout; I tried to sit there so I could "accidentally" keep bumping knees with Hiccup, but Tuff shoved me out of the way and plunked his butt on the bench, smirking at me.

I wanted to punch him, but everyone would kind of notice if I did that, and then I would have to explain why I was pissed at him, and I obviously didn't wanna do that, so I took the only seat leftâ€”between Snotlout and Fishlegs.<p>

"Now," Gobber said. "Who would like to talk about what they did wrong in the ring today?"

No one said anything. An owl hooted.

"All right," he grunted. "Who wants to talk about what they did \_right\_ today?"

"I didn't die," Fishlegs said happily.

"That'sâ€|always a plus," Hiccup said, blinking.

"Astrid beat the Nadder," Snotlout said, looking at her hopefully. Dream \_on\_, Snotlout.

"And how did she do that?" Gobber asked us.

No one said anything again. I picked at a patch of burnt chicken. On the other side of Snotlout, Tuff started humming.

"I used my available resources?" Astrid tried.

Gobber nodded. "Aye, there's thatâ€|but most importantly, your survival instinct kicked in. Yeh have te learn te trust it. Sometimes ye don't have time te stop and weigh your options; it's kill or be killed! I could've lost a lot more'n just this if I hadn't listened te instinct," he said, waving around his interchangeable arm.

"How did that happen, Gobber?" I asked, nodding at his hand. Ever since we were little, we'd always wondered how Gobber had lost his hand and his foot, but nobody had ever asked him, because not a lot of people \_voluntarily\_ stick around him long enough to, like, \_talk\_ to him. Except for Hiccup and Stoick, but they don't count.

Gobber looked really smug. "Oh, this thing?" he said like he'd just now noticed it. "Well, I'll tell yeh, it happened when all of you were wee little things; probably the size of the hand I lost!" He thought that was really funny. We didn't. "There was a raid on the village one night, and I found myself face-te-face with a particularly volatile Gronckle! I dodged flame after flame until he was all out of shotsâ€|and then, I took my hammer and \_swung\_ at him!"

"What happened?" Snotlout whispered.

Gobber looked a little too happy. "He opened his mouth and bit down on my arm!" I'm pretty sure the gasp I heard came from Tuff. "And with one twist, he took my hand and \_swallowed\_ it whole! And I saw the look on his faceâ€”I was delicious! He must've passed the word because it wasn't a month before another one of them \_took my leg\_, " he finished, holding up his peg leg as evidence.

We all whispered, "\_Wow\_." I'd never really thought about it before, mostly because it would be weird, but I guess if we were talking about how people tasted, I would've said Gobber was like, the

grossest. I mean, hello, it's \_Gobber\_. But dragons thought he was delicious. I wondered what I tasted like to dragons. I glanced at Hiccup. I wondered if Hiccup tasted goodâ€|

BAD THOUGHTS BAD THOUGHTS BAD THOUGHTS OH MY GODS BAD THOUGHTS

Fishlegs brought me from my completely inappropriate train of thought to his completely \_insane\_ oneâ€|I'm not sure which one was better. "Isn't it weird to think that your hand was inside a dragon? Like if your mind was still in control of it, you could've killed the dragon from the inside byâ€|" while he tried to think of a way Gobber could've killed the dragon, his two drumsticks battled with each other. Astrid looked completely grossed out. Tuff's eyes were glazed over. "â€|crushing his heart, or something!"

Snotlout was not paying attention to the nerd. "I swear, I'm so \_angry\_ right now!" he growled at his chicken. He looked up at Gobber. "I'll avenge your beautiful hand \_and\_ your beautiful foot! I'll chop off the legs of every dragon I fightâ€|with my \_face\_."

Gobber grunted, wiping his mouth as he swallowed. "It's the \_wings\_ and the \_tails\_ you really want," he corrected. "If it can't fly, it can't get away. A \_downed\_ dragon is a \_dead\_ dragon."

Not a lot of things Gobber says make a whole lot of sense, but that didâ€|without its wings, it was just some dumb reptile. Me and Astrid grinned at each other; Fishlegs tried to join in on the grinning, but I ignored him.

Gobber stretched and yawned. "All right; I'm off te bed. You should be too; tomorrow, we get to the big boysâ€|"

Fishlegs turned and beamed at me, and this time I grinned back. "Yeah!" I said, sitting up and scooting forward; now that I knew what I was doing, I couldn't wait to take down a dragon and impress Hiccup.

"â€|slowly but surely making our way up to the Monstrous Nightmare! But who'll win the honor of killing it?"

Tuff set his stick against the fire pit, leaning back with a smug look on his face. "It's gonna be me; it's my destiny! See?" And he pulled down his sleeve and showed us a tattoo.

My brother had a tattoo. Of a \_dragon\_. \_And he didn't tell me\_.

What the Hel?

Fishlegs let out a gasp. "Your mom let you get a tattoo?" Um, no, she most certainly did not.

"It's not a tattoo, it's a birthmark," Tuff said, pulling his sleeve back. He tried to look smug, but I could tell he was watching me nervously.

I decided to call him out on it. "Okay, I've been stuck with you since birth, and that was \_never\_ there before," I scoffed.

"Yes it was!" he insisted, but the look on his face said that he knew he was totally busted. "You've just never seen me from the left side until now!"

"That is such dragonshit, Tuff!" I snorted. "We used to take baths together when we were like five, remember that?" Actually, we'd taken baths together up until we were ten, but whatever. I wrinkled my nose. "Although, judging by the smell, that was the last time you took one."

Snotlout, Fishlegs, and Gobber laughed. Tuff glared. Astrid moved back to her seat and I realized that Hiccup was missing.

"Hey, where'd my loser cousin go?" Snotlout asked "so I wasn't the only one to notice."

"He probably smelled Tuff and took off," I deadpanned. I yelped when my brother got up and yanked on a braid. Still, though "where \_was\_ Hiccup, and how come I hadn't noticed him leave?"

"Play nice," Gobber warned. "I'm leavin'; don't kill each other."

"I can't make any promises!" I shouted after him.

"Whaddya think we're gonna start on tomorrow?" Tuff said, biting a huge chunk out of his chicken.

"Probably the Terrible Terror," Astrid said, flipping her fringe out of her eyes. "It's the smallest, isn't it?"

"But it's really lethal" the Dragon Manual says it's one of the smartest dragons \_ever\_, " Fishlegs said, his eyes getting wide.

I rolled my eyes. "He said we're moving onto the \_big boys\_, Fishlegs; Terrible Terrors are like, the size of kittens."

"Maybe he meant 'big' as in, you know 'big in reputation' or something," Fishlegs muttered.

Me and Astrid rolled our eyes at each other.

"I bet you I'm going to take down \_all\_ those dragons," Snotlout said, flexing his muscles. No, seriously; he legit flexed his muscles. "They're gonna call me Snotlout the \_Invincible\_."

"Snotlout the \_Badass\_," Tuff said, and they both high-fived.

"More like Snotlout the \_Dumbass\_," I snorted. Astrid smirked at me.

We talked about what kind of dragon we would probably fight tomorrow and who was probably gonna get to fight the Monstrous Nightmare; when we finished dinner, all of us headed home. When Astrid peeled off and it was just me and Tuff, I yanked on his arm and stopped him. "I want one."

Tuff stared. "Want a \_what\_?"

"A tattoo," I said, shoving at his sleeve so that I could see the tattoo. It was really kick-ass, I'm not even gonna lie; it was a red dragon with its wings open, fire coming out of its mouth and hanging onto its tail.

Tuff smirked. "Jealous much?"

I glared. "I want one, fart-face."

"What makes you think I'll give you one, turkey-tit?"

I rolled my eyes. "Because I'll tell Mom if you don't."

He pouted. "\_Fine\_". But just so you know, I didn't do this myself, dung-for-brains."

"How'd you get it?" I wanted to know, tracing the design.

"Uncle Bloodnut."

\_Of course\_. Still... "How come he gave you one and not me?" That shit was not cool!

"You never asked," he said, shrugging. "I think he's gonna do Lout, too."

I stamped my foot. "I'm your \_twin\_, Tuff; we're supposed to do everything together!"

"I thought you hated doing everything together," he accused.

"Only sometimes," I grumbled. "I hate it when we have to like, do \_laundry\_ together; getting \_tattoos\_ together is totally kick-ass!"

Tuff looked like he was thinking about it. "Okay," he said after a minute. "We can go to Uncle Bloodnut's after training tomorrow."

I grinned. "Awesome."

\* \* \*

><p>When we got to the ring the next morning, Gobber had six buckets of water waiting for us.<p>

"Uhâ€|" Hiccup said.

"Everyone grab a bucket and a partner," Gobber said. It took about five seconds for me to grab Astrid. Tuff and Snotlout paired up, high-fiving, and Hiccup and Fishlegs stood next to each other. Gobber motioned to Badbreath, who was working the bolt. "Today is about teamwork." The doors opened with an explosion of green gas. "Now, a wet dragon head can't light its fireâ€"the Hideous Zippleback is \_extra\_ tricky!" Oh, gods, a Zippleback? That's like fighting two dragons at once. "One head \_breathes\_ gas; the other head \_lights\_ it. Your job is to know which is which."

By the time Gobber was finished with his instructions for the day, me and Astrid were surrounded by the gas, which made seeing our target a real bitch. We stood back-to-back and kept turning in circles, but of

course that didn't do, like, anything. How the Hel was I supposed to impress Hiccup if I couldn't even see the dragon I was supposed to be taking down? I could hear Snotlout yakking nearby, but I couldn't make out what he said until he shouted, "There!"

AND THEN THE IDIOTS POURED WATER ON US.

Seriously, my brother is such a dumbass.

"Hey!" I snapped when the smoke cleared and I got a look at Tuff and Snotlout's dumb faces. "It's us, idiots!"

Snotlout looked worriedâ€"probably because he thought it ruined his nonexistent chances with Astrid. Tuff shrugged and said, "Your butts are getting bigger; we thought you were a dragon!" He snickered like it was really hilarious. Hint: it wasn't.

"Not that there's anything wrong with a dragonesque figâ€" Snotlout was trying to say before Astrid socked him in the face. I threw my bucket at Tuff, who was still smirking, and knocked him to the ground. Before he could sit up all the way, somethingâ€"although by something I guess I mean the Zipplebackâ€"yanked him backwards and into the smoke. I felt my stomach dropâ€"did that dragon seriously just eat my brother? I could hear him screaming and shouting in the back and I moved forward, although I wasn't exactly sure what I was gonna do.

"Wait," Astrid whispered, picking up her bucket.

We waited for a minute before something knocked our feet out from under us and we sprawled on the ground, yelping. Tuff burst out of the smoke a minute later; he actually crawled on me (and of course he didn't stop when I shouted in pain) and got to his feet, wailing, "Oh, I am hurt; I am very much hurt!"

"Chances of survival are dwindling into the single digits now," Fishlegs said nervously.

Thank you for that piece of optimism, O Nerdy One.

A Zippleback head poked out of the smoke and me and Astrid scrambled backwardsâ€"we didn't have water or weapons, so we were kind of screwed. Still, thoughâ€"it was a totally badass dragon. Fishlegs managed to dump his water on the head, but then it breathed gas. "Oh," he said, chuckling nervously. "Wrong head." It belched a jet of gas at him and he ran away, screaming. No, seriously, he screamed like a little girl.

And he's part Berserk.

"Fishlegs!" Gobber shouted. Both heads turned on Hiccup. "Now, Hiccup!"

Hiccup threw, but I could tell even before all the water came out that it wasn't high enough. The Zippleback stared as the water splashed on the ground. Hiccup slumped. "Aw, come on." The head that sparks growled and then snapped at him, sending him to the ground. Its wings were open in what I guessed was a warning sign. I felt my fists clenchâ€"even though I knew Hiccup always came out alive, I still couldn't help getting nervous with a dragon just a few feet

away from him, you know?

"Hiccup!" Gobber shouted, running forward. My fists unclenched a little—"Gobber would help him.

And then something really weird happened. The Zippleback suddenly backed up. Hiccup didn't say or do anything; he was just sitting there when all of a sudden it freaked and jerked back like he'd burned it or something. He got up, walking forward slowly and saying, "Back! Back! \_Back\_!" I glanced at Tuff, who was just now pulling his helmet back on—"his eyes were as big as mine felt. "Now don't you make me tell you again!" Hiccup was saying. He backed it all the way into its cage. "Yes, that's right; back, into your cage. Now think about what you've done." It scrambled all the way to the back corner and even tried to climb up the wall.

What. The. Hel.

Hiccup closed the doors and turned around. I'm not sure what the others looked like, but I'm pretty sure I looked like a major idiot. All I could think was \_Hiccupâ€|dragonâ€|Hiccupâ€|\_ He wiped his hands on his vest. "Okay! So, are we done? 'Causeâ€|I've got some things I need to, uhâ€|" He gestured to the side. "Yep, see you tomorrow!" And he ran out of the ring.

It was probably five minutes before anyone said anything.

"What the \_Hel\_ was that?" Snotlout wanted to know.

Astrid shook her head. "I have no idea."

I'm not sure what I was trying to say, but all that came out was, "Guh." Hiccup had totally just \_beasted\_ that dragon; what happened to Hiccup the \_Useless\_?

"He controlled it with his \_mind\_," Fishlegs whispered.

That's when we came back to reality, mostly. Tuff rolled his eyes. "Oh, \_please\_."

"You explain it, then!" Fishlegs challenged.

But Tuff couldn't. \_None\_ of us could. Gobber cleared his throat. "Eh, wellâ€|I'll see you all tonight."

\* \* \*

><p>"That was weird," I said as me and Tuff headed to Uncle Bloodnut's. "Like, <em>really<em> weird."

"\_Uber\_ weird," Tuff agreed. "He didn't even use any weapons or \_anything\_."

"I know!" I said, throwing out my arms. "Likeâ€|how did he \_do\_ that?"

Tuff gave me a smirk, and I knew I probably wasn't gonna like what he had to say next. "Looks like you're gonna have to try harder to impress Hiccy now."



I stared. "Oh my gods, did you just call him \_Hiccy\_?"

"It was the first cutesy nickname I could think of, give me some slack," he scoffed. We stopped in front of Uncle Bloodnut's house. Tuff turned to me, grinning. "You ready, sis?"

I grinned back. "Oh, \_Hel\_ yes."

## 6. Between Me and You

A/N: #thisweekhasbeensobusyican'teven. But seriously. ohemgee. And I move into my dorm two weeks from today, so it's all just uphill from here. And I do mean uphill; I go to school in the mountains. YAY FITNESS.

So a few things about this chapter: 1. There will be a lot of tattoo-talk in this chapter, and while I did do my research, I profess that I don't actually know what a tattoo feels like because I don't have one. Yet. I'm considering getting the Deathly Hallows on my shoulder and either an equal sign or a heart or something similar to show my support of gay marriage somewhere; thoughts? 2. Now, I flipped through the books to try and find the Hairy Hooligan motto, and as much as I love Cressida Cowell, I do believe I found some continuity in her books. Either that or she intentionally made the Hooligans forgetful. I looked for the Hooligan motto all over the books, and I ran into various phrases, some of which Stoick blatantly shouted were the Hooligan motto; I finally settled on "He Who Hits Hardest Lives Longest", because that is what is printed on Hiccup's report card and it sounds official-ish. Also because it sounds like something Snotlout would want for his tattoo. 3. Boys are bastards. Especially when they are teenagers and there are naked girls in the vicinity. Remember this, ladies.

My sincerest thanks to my reviewers: \*\*Hicc, Darned4AllEternity, TemariTheWolf, Catnip-Packet, (anonymous reviewer whose name I didn't catch), 123NinjaKat,\*\* and \*\*4ever2010\*\*. And to my anonymous reviewers:

**\*\*Nameless:\*\*** Sorry, wasn't able to get your name :) Thank you so much! That really does mean a lot to me; I think it's pretty much my mission to make Ruffnut more than just background noise to everyone, so if I managed to even partially do that for someone who concentrates on another character/ship entirely, I am a happy panda. Thanks again for the awesome review!

**\*\*123NinjaKat:\*\*** Haha, don't worry, there is NO such thing as talking too much with me; I love hearing from my readers, and the more, the better :D I think Ruffnut's feelings for Hiccup can be interpreted many different ways; if you have a deviantArt, I highly suggest you check out **\*\*AvannaK\*\***'s oneshot "Celebrate", where Ruffnut is attracted to Hiccup because of the "crazy" way he handles dragons and not just because it makes him popular. My personal interpretation is that she always liked Hiccup because I don't think Ruffnut would be shallow enough to change her mind about a boy on a whim.  
**\*coughAstridcough\*** Oh, girl, don't even worry about talking about Harry Potter; I'm always happy to talk to another Potter fan! I'm gonna miss them too D: FANFICTION, LOOK OUT. XD Thanks so much for the review(s)!

And now, without any further ado, chapter six!

\* \* \*

><p>"Now: what were ya thinkin' o' gettin'?" Uncle Bloodnut wanted to know, picking up some jars of ink.<p>

I thought about it for a minute. "I want a dragon like Tuff's," I decided. And then I remembered the Zippleback from earlier today. It was dangerous, unpredictable, and it had two heads instead of one, which reminded me of how everyone kind of thought me and Tuff were one person, even though we're two separate people. "Only," I added, "only I want it to be green instead of red, and on my right wrist instead of my left wrist."

Uncle Bloodnut grinned. "Aye, that'll be somethin'," he said, sitting down at the table. I wondered how much of the junk at the table was for the tattoo and how much was just junk. He shook up the bottles of ink. "I can do it, but it's detailedâ€"it'll take a while."

"That's fine," I said. Hel, I was getting a \_tattoo\_; I would've sat there all day.

Uncle Bloodnut took my arm and stared at my wrist for a long time, muttering to himself and poking it every now and then. Finally he reached for the needle and held my arm down with his left hand. "Hold still."

It hurt like a \_mother\_. I hissed like an angry cat when the needle first stuck itself into my skin.

"Don't jerk," Uncle Bloodnut said calmly, like this kind of thing happened all the time.

I held my fist up to my mouth and bit into it, trying not to shout. It really, \_really\_ hurt.

Tuff grabbed my hand out of my mouth and turned it over so that I was grabbing his hand. "Squeeze the hell out of it; it'll make you feel better," he said. He puffed up his chest. "And it's not like it'll hurt me."

I squeezed. He yelped.

"You sure about that?" I drawled.

"That didn't hurt," he lied. "You justâ€"took me by surprise, is all!"

I wincedâ€"\_damn\_", was Uncle Bloodnut tattooing my \_bone\_? "Yeah, sure," I grunted, squeezing again.

"So, Lout's thinking of getting a huge, flaming Monstrous Nightmare on his chest, or something," Tuff said. "Only he wants to wait until he builds up his abs so it'll look \_beastly\_."

I snortedâ€"that sounded just like Snotlout. "He's not getting \_Astrid\_ on his arm or anything?"

"It's gonna be his last resort if she doesn't go out with him," Tuff said, smirking. I really, really hoped he was joking. "Right now he's thinking of our motto, 'He Who Hits Hardest, Lives Longest', on his shoulder or someplace where his parents won't see it and totally freak out at him."

I thought about that; that would be a pretty badass tattoo, not even gonna lie. "He should do it."

Tuff looked relieved, for some reason. "Yeah. Hey, what do you think aboutâ€|"

We talked for a while about tattoos, like which ones would look cool where and what ones Snotlout wanted (like skeletons all over his arms) and which ones of those were totally lame (there a lot of those). I didn't figure it out until Uncle Bloodnut was almost done. "Hey!" I said. "You're trying to distract me!"

Tuff smirked. "Well, it worked, didn't it?"

I blinked. "Wellâ€|yeahâ€|I guess it did."

"There ya go, lass," Uncle Bloodnut said, setting down the needle.

"Already?" I looked at the tattoo for the first timeâ€"it felt like looking at it before it was finished would be bad luck. It looked almost exactly like Tuff's tattoo, but mine was green, so the flames were easier to make out. I turned my wrist one way and then the other, watching the light catch on it.

"Whaddya think?" Uncle Bloodnut asked.

"\_Whoa\_," I whispered.

Tuff leaned over to get a look. "Holy shit, Ruff!" he yelled. In my ear. "That's totally badass!"

I grinned. "Hel yes it is!" I high-fived him and then winced; my whole \_arm\_ hurt. "Oh, ow."

"I forgot te mention: it'll be sore fer a day or two," Uncle Bloodnut said, putting up the ink jars.

"Ha, have fun fighting a Gronckle with that!" Tuff sniggered. I kicked him.

"Now, don't you let yer mother see that," Uncle Bloodnut warned. "Last thing I need is for her te put my head on a spit."

I snorted, still staring at my tattoo. "I'm not an idiot."

"I know yer not," Uncle Bloodnut said, trying to ruffle my hair. Only that doesn't work so well with braids, so instead he just pinched my ear. "Now, it'll be red and puffy fer a couple o' days, so yeh might want te wait before showin' it off."

I poutedâ€"I wanted to show it off \_now\_. Still, though, maybe it was better off this wayâ€"at the rate I was going, I wasn't gonna impress Hiccup with my dragon fighting skills anytime soon, so maybe I could

use this as my backup. I mean, hello, tattoos are total turn-ons for guys. I think. I'm pretty sure. I know most girls are turned on by guys who have tattoos, so I'm assuming it works in reverse.

"The skin will also probably peel; just wash it once or twice a day and it'll clear up in a couple of weeks," Uncle Bloodnut added.

Oh, great, that was exactly what I needed to impress Hiccup. "Hey, Hiccup, you wanna see my tattoo? Yeah, just ignore the flakes of skin, they'll go away soon." Um, how about no?

It throbbed a little on the way home, but that was nothing compared to how it felt when I had to pull my sleeve back on so mom wouldn't see. I said a few words I actually probably shouldn't repeat here before going inside. Of course Mom had to ask questionsâ€"I swear on Odin's third eye she has this sense where she knows when me or Tuff did something we weren't supposed to, like when sometimes we sneak into Gobber's house and steal his left socks and he thinks trolls did it.

"You were gone an awful long time," she said almost the minute we walked in.

"We were fighting a Zippleback today," Tuff said, shrugging. "And then we stopped at Uncle Bloodnut's after."

She pursed her lips. "Hmm." And then, I swear to Frigg, she took one look at me and she knew something was wrong. "You hurt yourself today, didn't you?" she said, her eyes getting all big.

I tried to act like I wasn't freaking out. Which, I'm not gonna lie, I kinda was. "Well, duh, we're fighting dragons," I snorted. "Chill, Mom, I've had worse."

She pursed her lips again. "I suppose so." Uh, understatement; I've had a Hel of a lot worse, and she knew it. It was times like these when I wished Dad was there so he could distract Mom. I shot a look at Tuff, who dropped his helmet on the table and whined, "Mom, I'm totally hungry."

"You're always hungry," she said, but in that you're-a-gross-teenage-boy-but-it's-cute kind of way. I seriously don't get this sometimes; my mom gets on my case for, like, everything, but if Tuff does it, she thinks it's sweet. Where is the justice in that? It's bad enough he has a penis and thinks that makes him better than me; she's just feeding his gigantic ego. You'd think she would favor me because I'm a girl and, like, easier to relate to than something that thinks with its stomach and its dick, but nope, that's my mom for you.

I sat down across from Tuff, who was picking his nails with a knife, I just want to remind you, and dropped my head on my left arm. I'd barely closed my eyes when Mom smacked me on the back of the head. "Sit up, young lady, and get your hair off the table!"

I sat up and stared at her. "What?"

"I have no idea where your hair's been; I don't want it on my table," she snorted.

My mouth fell open. "Tuff is \_picking his nails\_â€"

"Ruffnut!" Mom glared. "Stop pointing fingers!"

I turned to stare at Tuffnut, who was snickering. I threw my helmet at him. He yelped, falling off his chair. "Oh, I am hurt, I am very much hurt!"

"Ruffnut!"

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup didn't show up at Mead Hall that night. We waited for a while, but then Gobber grunted something about "head in the clouds" and made us shut up. "All right," he said. "You know what's coming."<p>

"Where did we all go wrong in the ring today?" Tuff said, making fun of Gobber's thick burr. Me and Snotlout sniggered; Gobber smacked the three of us on the back of the head.

"Since you're so talkative tonight, Tuffnut, why don't you go first?" he said.

Tuff scowled. "\_I\_ didn't do anything wrong," he whined, pointing his drumstick at Gobber accusingly. "That dragon grabbed me!"

"And do you know \_why\_ it grabbed you?"

Before Tuff could mouth off a smart-ass answer, Astrid said, "Because he wasn't paying attention to his surroundings?"

Gobber nodded. "Correct."

"There was gas\_ everywhere\_!" Tuff shouted, waving his arms.

"As I recall, you could still see the girls well enough to throw water at them," Gobber said dryly.

"\_Yeah\_, butt-elf," I sneered, punching his shoulder.

Tuff glared, rubbing his shoulder. "We \_thought\_ you guys were a \_dragon\_, okay?"

"Not that there's anything wrong withâ€" Astrid punched Snotlout before he could finish that sentence.

While Gobber made some speech about, like, paying attention to what's going on around you or whatever, I dropped my chin in my hand and stared at my plate. Where \_was\_ Hiccup? He had just completely owned that dragon today; wouldn't he want to come to the hall tonight where he would be the center of attention for once? I mean, the center of attention in a \_good\_ way, not the oh-sorry-for-just-burning-down-half-the-village way. Everyone wanted to know how he'd done itâ€"I could tell that even Astrid was \_dying\_ to ask him, but of course she'd never admit it.

On the way home, Tuff tugged on one of my braids and said, "You looked like you were reading a saga in your dinner back there."

I punched his back. "Just thinking."

"About \_Hiccup\_?" he asked in what I guess he thinks is a girly voice. Except it came out sounding like a troll with a cold or something.

I glared. "Maybe."

"Thinking about how he dominated that dragon today?"

I shrugged, not really sure what Tuff was getting at. "Yeahâ€|"

"Bet you want him to dominate \_you\_â€|"

I chased him all the way back to the house.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup was the last to show up the next morning.<p>

"Where were you last night?" I asked, trying to sound like I didn't really care. Whichâ€|probably didn't work out so well.

"Yeah, how did you scare off that dragon?" Tuff wanted to know.

Hiccup turned pink. "Uh, oh, Iâ€|don'tâ€|know?"

We stared at him.

"I really don't," he said, shrugging. "It just started screeching and backing up."

"\_Told\_ you he moved it with his mind," Fishlegs whispered. We all rolled our eyes at that.

Snotlout wrinkled his nose. "Wait, does anyone else smell eel?"

I sniffed. Something \_did\_ \_smell\_ weirdâ€| "You knowâ€|I doâ€|"

"Yeah, me too," Tuff agreed.

"Oh, uh, that's me, sorry," Hiccup said, blushing a little. And okay, this sounds totally un-Viking-ly, but his blush is adorable. Tell anyone I said that and you will meet a slow and painful death. "I had some for breakfast."

Snotlout made a face. "You ate eel \_voluntarily\_?"

"Let's get started!" Gobber shouted.

I looked around and realized there were six buckets of water. Again. Tuff must've been thinking the same thing I was (I swear, this twin thing kinda creeps me out sometimes), because he groaned, "We're facing the Zippleback \_again\_? That dragon totally tried to eat me!"

"And what else, might I ask, would a dragon do with you?" Astrid deadpanned. I sniggered.

Before Tuff could say anything, Gobber said, "You won't face a dragon once and be done with itâ€”the more you face a dragon, the more you know its strengths and its weaknesses. You all barely lasted five minutes with the Gronckleâ€”"

"Perhaps setting a dangerous dragon on inexperienced teenagers has something to do with it," Hiccup muttered.

"â€”and the Nadder was an absolute disaster. No, yer facing the Zippleback today," Gobber snorted. He motioned to Badbreath, and we all grabbed our buckets of water.

But the doors didn't open with an explosion of smoke this time. Instead, the Zippleback just blinked at us from a corner of its cage. We waited for a second, holding our breaths, but then nothing happened. They just stared.

"What in blue blazesâ€”?" Gobber stumped up to the cage. "Come on, you great brute, get out!" The Zippleback snapped at him but didn't move. It kept looking at Hiccup, actuallyâ€”it remembered him. Gobber figured this out and grumbled. "Well, looks like yeh scared off our lesson fer today, Hiccup," he said, but you could tell he was kind of proud. "And since I haven't prepared for any of the other dragons, looks like there won't \_be \_a lesson today."

"Isn't there another dragon we can practice with?" Astrid demanded to know. "What about the Terrible Terror? We haven't faced that one yet."

Gobber shook his head. "Ah, no, that's a tricky blighter; I won't set you up with that bastard 'til yeh've all had some more practice. Nah, no lesson today, and no meeting in the hall tonight, either; go take a day off."

Astrid looked pissed as Hel, but I was secretly glad; my wrist was kind of sore, and the last thing I wanted to do with it was swing around weapons and try to look all badass. It's hard stabbing something with a throbbing wrist and looking all "oh yeah, I just killed that, so what," you know? Everyone else looked relieved, too; after three days of humiliation and running for our lives, a break sounded \_awesome\_. Except for Astrid, of course. Pretty much the second we were out of earshot, she complained, "How are we supposed to graduate from \_dragon training\_ if we don't \_train\_ with any \_dragons\_?"

"Gods, Astrid, it's \_one day\_; I think we'll live," I snorted.

"And it's one less lesson we're getting," she snapped. "And it's not like we couldn't use it." Well, okay, she had a point there: we did all kind of suck. And by kind of I mean really.

"Well, if you \_really\_ wanna train," Snotlout said, sliding his arms around our shoulders, "you could always come over and \_work out\_ in my basement." He turned to smirk at me. He couldn't see, but Astrid looked she was about to hurl behind him. "You're \_more\_ than welcome to come too, Ruff."

"We're not having a threesome, you pervert!" I gagged, shoving his arm off of me.

Astrid punched him in the stomach. "Besides," she huffed, dusting off her hands, "Ruff and I are going to the springs."

I raised an eyebrow. "Oh, we are?"

"Yes, we are," she said in a very bossy voice. She turned to glare at Snotlout, who was massaging his stomach. "And you are not watching." Snotlout pouted. Astrid grabbed my arm and dragged me over the bridge and to the springs. Well, guess I wouldn't be visiting Uncle Bloodnut todayâ€¦

"If I'm gonna lose my arm, Astrid, I want it to be because a dragon chewed it off, not because you pulled it off," I said as we got to the springs.

She let me go. "Sorry. I just wantedâ€¦ away from them," she said, waving a hand to the side. "I knew the springs were probably one of the only places they wouldn't follow us." She reached down to tug off her boots.

"Are you kidding?" I snorted, but I started stripping anyway; a dip in the springs sounded nice. "We're naked girls and they're teenage boys. Think about it, Astrid."

She made a face, pulling off her leggings. "That's your brother, Ruff!"

"He won't be looking at me, stupid!" I said, totally grossed out. I mean, ew, Astrid! "He'll be looking at you!" I watched her pull off her shirt. "And your enormous boobs. Seriously, where did those things come from, and where can I get them?"

"If I could give them to you, I would," she groaned, stepping out of her skirt. "Then maybe guys would look me in the eye for once instead of talking to my chest."

"Who wants that when they could be checking out your hot body?" I snorted. "People think I'm my brother. My brother, Astrid! And these mosquito bites aren't helping!" I grabbed the two bumps on my chest (under the wrapping, of course) and shook them to get my point across. I'm just saying, okay? They're there, yeah, but you don't even notice them half the time.

Astrid rolled her eyes. "We're only fourteen; I'm sure your breasts won't stay that size forever."

"Well, it's not like they've done a lot of growing," I muttered, kicking off my skirt.

Astrid took off her wrappings and slid into the spring; when I was naked too, I jumped in. Astrid gave me a Look as she pushed her wet fringe out of her eyes. "Graceful."

"I try." I stretchedâ€¦ "the hot water felt amazing."

Astrid sat up. "Did you get singed by the Gronckle, or is that what I think it is?"

I smirked. "You didn't think I was gonna let Tuff get away with being



the \_only\_ twin with a tattoo, didja?"

Astrid pushed herself over to my side and grabbed my wrist. "It's really good," she said, tracing it. "Your uncle?"

I nodded. "Yeah, yesterday after practice."

She splashed me. "You're supposed to tell me these things!"

"I was going to!" I insisted, because I \_was\_, really. "I wanted to wait until it stopped looking all red and puffy and gross first, and then I was gonna be all, 'Hey, guys, look at this \_totally badass\_ tattoo I got,' and then everyone would be all, 'Oh, Ruff, you're so cool, you wanna go make out now?'"

"Who exactly is supposed to be asking that last part?" Astrid wanted to know, her eyebrows raised.

I felt my face get hot, and \_not\_ from the spring. "I couldn't tell her who I was \_really\_ imagining, because that would make this conversation really, really awkward. "I don't know, just someone," I lied, waving a hand like it didn't matter. "The point is, I was \_going\_ to tell you guys."

"As long as you told me first." Astrid sat back, sinking down a few inches. I sank down too and started blowing some bubbles into the water. "So is that the only secret you've been keeping lately?"

I choked and sat up, spitting out the water I'd accidentally sucked in. "\_What\_?" I rasped.

Astrid shrugged, her eyes doing this skittering around thing they do when she doesn't really want to talk about something. "It just feels like you've been hiding something lately. Something. you don't want to tell me."

I was totally ready to tell her I was fine, what the Hel was she talking about. but something stopped me. Tuff already knew about my crush on Hiccup, and if my plan worked, everyone would find out soon. I took a deep breath. "Actually, I do need to tell you something." But before I could say anything, we heard a twig snap and shrieked. "we were totally naked, and our clothes and weapons were too far away to reach from here."

"Who's there?" Astrid shouted, sinking a little to make sure her boobs were out of sight.

I had a really bad feeling I knew who it was. "Tuffnut Thorston, I swear on Loki's saggy left ball, if that's you."

"Well, hel\_lo\_, ladies!" Snotlout said, grinning as he and Tuff stumbled out from behind some bushes.

Astrid's arms went protectively over her boobs. "What the \_Hel\_ is wrong with you two?" she shouted. "I am going to \_kill\_ you when I get my clothes back on!"

"I'm not even gonna kill you," I growled. "I'm gonna rip your balls off and feed them to a Gronckle!"

"Well, to prevent that from happening," Tuff said, smirking, "we're just gonna take your clothes."

Astrid's glare was so deadly that even \_I \_got scared. "Don't. You. Dare."

"You're welcome to get out and stop us," Snotlout sniggered, winking.

And then the dragon turds took our clothes and \_ran away\_.

I've never heard Astrid scream so loud before.

## 7. Rock Paper Scissors

A/N: I really didn't think I'd get this chapter up today; I was supposed to go to the lake with a friend, and it was only through a series of unfortunate events that our trip has been delayed a few hours, and I thought to myself, "Well, nothing better to do; might as well update." So here I am. Speaking of which, the next update is most likely going to be delayed, but I can't say how long the wait will be; I'm moving into my dorm a week from today, and I have a shit-ton of other things to take care of, including getting books, meeting with my advisor to officially declare my major, making several trips to Walmart because my roommate and I remembered that we forgot something, running around campus like a chicken with its head cut off and screaming, "OH MY GOD I MISSED YOU!" to everyone I recognize, etc., etc. So yes. No idea when chapter eight will go up, and honestly, I'm not making it a priority, because I am way too fucking excited to get out of my house and back to college.

So, moving on! I loved all the reviews asking if Hiccup was going to come to the rescue for the girls; women (and men?) after my own heart. XD Unfortunately, Hiccup is off with Toothless at this point in the story, which actually might be just as well for his sake; Astrid might kill him if he saw her in any form of undress.

Huge, huge, HUGE thanks to \*\*4ever2010, Annabeth the Unicorn, 123NinjaKat, RockstarVikingAngel, LeDragonQuiMangeDuPoisson, Voldyne, TemariTheWolf, \*\*and \*\*Hicc\*\* for their reviews; you guys are the best! And to my loyal anonymous reviewer:

\*\*123NinjaKat:\*\* Aw, you don't have to read this the minute you get it! You're so sweet :) Hmm, that's tough; it's a toss-up between Luna and Draco. Luna because she's so awesome, and Draco because he's so snarky. #idkyilovesnobs. So yes, I like Draco, hee. And I'm a Ravenclaw, holla! What's your favorite character/what house are you in?

Hope you guys enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>It took about an hour of shouting before Fishlegs found us. Great; I was wet and naked and the only boy who <em>hadn't<em> seen me was the one I \_wanted\_ to get naked for. Figures. But Fishlegs was pretty nice about it, even if I did threaten to gouge out his eyes if he looked at anything or told anyone what he saw; he came back half an hour later with our clothes and stood guard while we changed back

into them. Then he held down Snotlout and Tuffnut for us while we beat the crap out of them, so he went up a few points in my book.

The next morning, there were a few Vikings from the village at the ringâ€”I guess they'd heard what epic fails our classes were turning into and wanted to watch. Gobber had a few small barriers set outâ€”they looked more like hurdles than actual walls. "Today," he said, "you'll be facing the Gronckle again. Before we begin, I want you to tell me what you know about the Gronckle."

Everyone turned to look at Fishlegs, who took a deep breath and said, "The Gronckle has a jaw strength of eight, firepower of seven, shot limit of six and aim of three, and it has an armor of nineteen, and to defeat it you would need at \_least\_ plus five speed."

"Numbers, numbers!" Gobber scoffed, waving his hook around. "What did you \_learn\_ about it, though?"

We had to think about that.

"It's easily distracted," Astrid said after a minute. "It couldn't fire when we were making noise."

Gobber grinned. "Aye."

"A dragon will always go for the kill," I remembered.

"Pay attention?" Snotlout tried.

Gobber looked like he wanted to clap his hands. I mean, that would've been kind of hard and probably really painful with his hook, but whatever. "Excellent! Much better than the first time. Now, what's the first thing you're going to do?"

"Get a shield!" Tuff shouted, looking excited that he'd remembered.

Gobber was seriously almost tearing up. "Aye!" he roared. "Badbreath, let her out!"

Everyone scrambled for the pile of shields as we heard the doors swing open. The Gronckle roared and snarled at us, and I had to tug Tuff behind one of the barriers before he got blasted. Astrid and Snotlout were hiding behind the one near us; she looked totally grossed out. "Anyone have a plan?" I asked.

"Uh, \_survive\_" Tuff snorted.

I peeked over the top of the barrier and saw Hiccup running from the Gronckle. \_Yes\_, this was my chance to impress him! Finally! I stood up all the way and banged my spear against my shield. The Gronckle closed its jaws and hovered, its eyes twitching. Hiccup angled and ran towards us; he dove behind the barrier and gasped as he hit the ground. "Oh, thank you," he panted.

I wanted to say something witty and impressive, but all that came out was, "No problem."

"Where's Fishlegs?" Astrid asked, elbowing Snotlout as he tried to

scoot closer to her.

We heard a long yell before Fishlegs rolled behind Astrid and Snotlout's barrier. "It ate my shield!" he yelped.

I stared. "It ate your shield?"

"Gronckles have very sturdy digestive tracts; they'll eat anything they can get their jaws on," Fishlegs explained.

"Well, that'sâ€¦comforting," Hiccup said, rolling his eyes.

"This is completely useless!" Astrid snapped. "We can't just hide here all day!"

The Gronckle must've agreed with her, because just then it blasted aside the barrier me, Tuff, and Hiccup were hiding behind. Everyone grabbed their shields (except for Fishlegs) and weapons and scattered, banging our weapons on our shields whenever it sounded close. Me and Tuff found another barrier to hide behind; we tried to come up with a plan, but nothing worked because he kept wanting me to distract it while he stabbed it and I wanted him to distract it while I stabbed it. I was just starting to yank his hair out of his skull when it hit me.

"What?" Tuff asked.

I let go of his hair. "Rock-paper-scissors."

I lost, so I had to run around like an idiot until the Gronckle reached its shot limit (and all I can say is thank Thor it has sucky aim), and then I jumped behind the barrier Astrid and Snotlout were hiding behind while Tuff tried to spear the Gronckle. Only that didn't work out too well, since it head-butted him so bad that it knocked him back about twenty feet.

"Well, we're fucked," Snotlout muttered.

And then something really weird happenedâ€"again. I couldn't see everything that was going on, but one minute the Gronckle was heading straight for Hiccup, and the next, it was on the ground, rolled onto its side. There was a really long pause while everyone just stared at it like it was gonna move, only it didn't. We could hear it breathing, so it wasn't dead, but it definitely wasn't about to attack anyone anytime soon.

After a long minute, Hiccup asked, "So, do we just roll it back or what?"

"Aye," Gobber said, staring.

So the six of us pushed the Gronckle (and trust me, it took all six of us) back into its cage. Hiccup dusted off his hands and then said, "Well, uh, see ya." And he walked out of the ring. I think Astrid and Fishlegs left too, but I wasn't really paying attention to them.

"Uh, did you guys see what I saw?" Snotlout asked me and Tuff.

"Hiccup totally taking down that Gronckle? Hel yes I did," Tuff snorted.

"Mmph," I said. I meanâ€|hot \_damn\_. Hiccup Haddock had just taken down a \_Gronckle\_. Cue bad jokes about him taking \_me\_ down. Heh.

We all gave each other a look and then tore after him. Tuff kept tripping me and got there first, so when I got there, I elbowed him in the backâ€|hard. He knew better than to get between me and my man (because he \_knew\_ that secretly, Hiccup was totally \_my\_ man). Snotlout was sucking up like crazy and it was making Hiccup do that \_adorable\_ blush again (I swear to the gods, if you tell anyone I said that, your death will be slow and painful). After a minute he stuttered, "Oh, I left my axe back in the ring!" He started to back up. "You guys go on ahead!" He ran into Astrid, who yelped. "I'll catch up with ya." And then he ran back to the ring.

I stared after him. How was he \_not\_ soaking up the attention right now? We were all being nice to him for the first time, like, everâ€|Hel, even \_Snotlout\_, who'd been torturing him since, like, we were in diapers, was kissing his ass. How was he not taking advantage of that?

"Whatever," Astrid huffed, stomping off. Um. \_Well\_, then.

"Hey Astrid!" Snotlout shouted, running after her. I rolled my eyes; kiss-ass.

"Would you guys like to look at my dad's collection of Nadder quills? I don't wanna brag, but it'sâ€|pretty impressive," Fishlegs said, sounding smug.

Tuff blinked. "Uh, you know, actually, we have to go visit our uncle."

I glanced at the ringâ€|Hiccup was back there. "But Hiccâ€|mmph!" because just then my loser brother slapped his hand over my mouth.

"We'll catch ya later, Legs!" Tuff said, dragging me with him. He still had a hand on my mouth, so I stuck out my tongue. "Oh, gross!" he yelped, wiping his hand on his vest.

"What the Hel was that?" I asked, spittingâ€|I mean, who knows where his hand has \_been\_? It's kind of a scary thought.

"Uh, I didn't wanna get stuck with Fishlegs, doy," Tuff snorted.

I ducked a tree branch as we stepped into the forest. "Yeah, but we were waiting on Hiccup."

"Hiccup obviously didn't want us to wait on him," Tuff said. "Or did you not notice him literally running away?" He smirked at me. "You can flirt with him later."

I shoved him. Hard. "At least my man can take down a Gronckle," I snapped. And yeah, I called Hiccup my man, so what? "How far did that Gronckle send you, bro? Twenty feet?"

Tuff scowled. "Those things are Friggin' strong, okay? What is it

Fishlegs said? They have an armor of like, nineteen or something!"

"Yeah, and your skull has a thickness of a hundred," I snorted, screeching as he jabbed me in the side.

"I will take down that Nightmare, just you wait and see!" he snapped.

I kicked his knee. "Dream on, bro."

The door to Uncle Bloodnut's cabin swung open. "I could hear you two coming from a mile off!" he bellowed. Like he's one to talk.

"It's not my fault numb-nuts here is so loud," I said, running into the cabin before Tuff could reach me.

"How was class today?" Uncle Bloodnut wanted to know, pouring us some ale.

"Tuff got his ass handed to him by the Gronckle, and Hiccup took it down," I said, smirking at my brother. He stuck his tongue out at me.

"Hiccup took it down?" Uncle Bloodnut asked, his eyes getting big. "On accident?"

"On purpose," I said proudly.

Uncle Bloodnut let out a low whistle. "Well, you know what they say about men who take down Gronckles," he said, winking.

"Hel yes I do," I said, taking a swig of ale. "Gronckles ain't the only things to go down for them, if ya know what I mean." Actually I'm not making this up: that's what I've heard in Mead Hall from, like, fifteen different men.

"Oh, gods, I don't need the mental image of Ruff and Hiccupâ€"ew\_," Tuff groaned, burying his head in his arm. "I'm gonna be sick."

"Pussy," I teased.

"How's yer tattoo?" Uncle Bloodnut asked like we hadn't just been talking about me going down on Hiccup. Which is probably not a normal conversation to have with your uncle, but you know, my uncle isn't exactly normal, so whatever.

I grinned. "It's not as sore as it was yesterday; Astrid thinks it's pretty awesome."

Uncle Bloodnut practically puffed up. "Aye, it is, at that," he said proudly.

"Mine's better," Tuff mutteredâ€"guess he still hadn't recovered from the mental image.

"So what's new in Madman's Gully?" I asked, leaning back in my chair. I was kind of jokingâ€"nothing happened in Madman's Gully.

"Ah, well, there's a dragon in these woods," Uncle Bloodnut said conversationally, like he was talking about some rain this morning or something.

Me and Tuff gave each other Looks. "Um." We love our uncle; we really do. But. He is crazy.

"I can hear it bellowing every now and then," he went on, pouring more ale in his cup. "Sounds like a Night Fury."

I rolled my eyes at my brother. "Um, okay. What is a Night Fury doing in the woods?"

"Laugh if you want to, but I've heard it enough times to know one when I hear one!" Uncle Bloodnut insisted.

"Soâ€|why isn't it attacking us?" Tuff wanted to know.

Uncle Bloodnut frowned. "Oh, go on with ya!" he snapped, getting up to move his stew from the fire. Me and Tuff snickered into our hands.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup didn't show up at Mead Hall again that night. Gobber acted like he didn't notice. "All rightâ€|""<p>

"I know, I know, I wasn't paying attention or whatever and I failed," Tuff groaned, dropping his head on the table.

Gobber frowned. "Actually, I was goin' te say that you all did good today."

Tuff's head came up with a snap. "Oh, thanks!"

I stared at Gobber. "Really?"

Gobber grinned, showing his rock tooth. "Aye! You applied what you learned in previous lessons and used it to your advantage, and most importantly, you worked together. That was excellent teamwork today; I'm proud of yeh!"

Well, damn. I raised my eyebrows at Tuff; this wasâ€|unexpected. Not that we were complaining, though.

"But it ate my shield," Fishlegs said, blinking.

"Aye; you were that close to it and got away alive, didn't yeh?" Gobber pointed out. "Obviously you lot weren't perfect, but it was a vast improvement. Eat up; we'll be training with the Nadder tomorrow."

Me and Tuff high-fived each other, but Astrid's mouth fell open. "You're not going to critique our performance today?" she asked in this high-pitched, nervous voice. "You're not going to tell us our weaknesses and where we could make improvements?"

"Oh, yeh did fine," Gobber scoffed, waving a hand. He stumped off to another table with a bunch of other crazy Vikingsâ€|"one of them was my Uncle Bloodnut, if that tells you anything.

"Congratulations, Astrid: you're officially perfect," I said, taking a huge bite of chicken.

She huffed. "So much for being hard on yourself. How are we supposed to learn anything if all he does is reward our good efforts and ignore our bad ones?"

"Uh, have you been here the past few days?" Tuff asked. "'Cause I'm pretty sure tonight was the first time he wasn't all, 'Argh, ye all suck, now listen to me batshit advice!'"

Me and Snotlout sniggered, but Astrid huffed again. "His advice is helpful if you know how to apply it."

Tuff rolled his eyes at me. "Uh, if you say so."

Astrid looked like she wanted to say something, or maybe bite his head off (I swear to Freya, PMS), but just then Snotlout said, "Hey Ruff, can I see your tattoo?"

I perked up. "Oh yeah!" I pulled off my sleeve and stuck out my arm. Snotlout and Fishlegs leaned in to get a better look.

"Whoa!" Snotlout said. "That's totally badass!"

"I know, right?" I said, bragging a little. Well, I mean, it was.

"What kind of dragon is that?" Fishlegs wanted to know. "I've never seen that one before."

I gave him a Look. "I don't know, it's just a dragon."

Fishlegs blinked. "But what kind of dragon?"

"A totally badass one," I snorted.

"Yeah, I'm thinking of getting a Monstrous Nightmare on fire on my chest," Snotlout said loudly, stretching; he kept looking over at Astrid. "But I dunno, what do you guys think?"

"Do it," Tuff said. "It would be beastly!" They high-fived.

"Monstrous Nightmares are said to be the most powerful dragons ever," Fishlegs said with big eyes. "That tattoo would be awesome!"

Snotlout actually grinned at Fishlegs. Then he turned to me and Astrid. "What do you ladies think?"

I put my chin in my hand. "It could be cool," I decided. "But it'd be sexy if you had a six-pack."

Snotlout grinned. "Oh, don't worry about that, babe; I'm totally working on it." Oh, I bet he was. He turned to Astrid. "What do you think, Astrid?"

Astrid swallowed her water. "I am not giving an opinion, because



frankly, I hope I'm never in a position to see it."

Snotlout pouted while me and Tuff roared with laughter.

## 8. Find a Happy Place

A/N: Y HELLO THAR. So, as anyone who's been reading the author's notes will know, I wasn't sure when I would get this chapter up; moving in was craaaaaazy, even more so than last year (you'd think it would be easier sophomore year, but noooooope, it's actually worse), and there was lots of excitement and fun and some not-so-fun times to be had, and somehow, I was finally able to find the time to sit down and give chapter eight a final edit and submit it. So here I am. I should warn you, though, that my computer is acting up again; yesterday it said it couldn't find the hard drive again, and considering this happened a month ago...I don't think that's a good sign. It did recover faster than it did last month, though, so I don't know. Anyway, all the files that need to be safe are, I'm fairly positive, backed up, but we'll keep our fingers crossed. And speaking of moving back in, I hope everyone who is a student has a FUN and SAFE back-to-school experience. :D

Also, this is officially the halfway point of Confessions of a Teenage Viking! Huzzah! I think. Maybe boo. I don't know.

Alsoalso, has anyone heard of this How to Hatch Your Dragon holiday special? I know it's only August, but...I'm superfuckinglyexcited. Because holidays with the Vikings are the best kind of holidays.

GIANT thanks must go to \*\*Voldyne, 123NinjaKat, Annabeth the Unicorn, TemariTheWolf, RockstarVikingAngel, Catnip-Packet,\*\* and \*\*u r awesome\*\* for reviewing; you guys make my day! And of course:

\*\*123NinjaKat:\*\* \*flap\* Gwa, thank you! Ruffcup is pretty much my OTP, lol. To an almost obsessive degree. Urgh, no, Gryffindor is cool, I guess, but the other houses are quirlier and funner. Slytherin and Ravenclaw is a good combination! I love Luna and Draco; I'm afraid I'm only fond of George when he's with Fred, though, heh. I LOVE BELLATRIX LESTRANGE. I want her evil sexy babies. No, your questions/comments aren't annoying at all! I LOVE Harry Potter; honestly, I could talk about it for days, so I definitely don't mind! Seriously, you have nothing to worry about :)

Hope you guys enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>When we got to the ring the next morning, there were a  
<em>lot<em> more villagers there than the day before, including my  
mom and Uncle Bloodnut. Hiccup looked freaked out when he showed up.  
"Whatâ€¦what is all this?" he asked, looking around.

"Your adoring fans!" I joked, flipping a braid over my shoulder.  
"Everyone heard about how you took down that Gronckle  
yesterday."

Hiccup blushed, and my heart did that flip-flopping thing again.

Gods, why did he have to be so \_cute\_? "They, they did?"

"Apparently," Astrid said rudely. "How \_did\_ you take down that Gronckle? I mean, since you won't come to the evening lessons."

"Oh gods!" Hiccup said, smacking his forehead. "I completely forgotâ€¦I'll be there tonight, I promise!"

I beamed at him, but Astrid said, "So? How \_did\_ you take down the Gronckle?"

"Uh," he stammered. "Well, I, uhâ€¦"

"All right, recruits, gather 'round!" Gobber said just then. Everyone looked as disappointed as I feltâ€¦"we all wanted to know how he'd done it. Gobber jerked his head at the crowd. "You've attracted a bit of attention," he said, winking at Hiccup. "Don't think about the crowd if they make you nervousâ€¦"just think about yer training. This is just another class, and this is just another dragon. Everyone ready?" But before anyone could say anything, he stumped away.

"Uh, so, I guess we're not using any barriers today?" Snotlout shouted after him. "So like, there's nothing to shield us from harm? No? Okay."

"Wait," Tuff said, his eyes getting big. "I don't wantâ€¦"

But the Deadly Nadder was already screeching and running out of its cage, so we ran for it. It went straight for Fishlegs, who yelled and started banging his mallet on his shield to try and distract it. Me and Tuff ran to the wall where Hiccup and Snotlout were ducking behind their shields and copied them.

"'Sup, Double-Menace," Snotlout said, like we \_weren't\_ hiding from a Deadly Nadder.

"Oh, you know, just running for our lives while our batshit teacher and the rest of the village watches; same old, same old," Tuff said in the same kind of voice.

Snotlout turned to Hiccup. "So, what's the plan?"

Hiccup turned white. "\_What\_?"

"What's the plan?" Snotlout repeated. "You scared the Zippleback and you took down the Gronckleâ€¦"you can take down the Nadder, too, can't you?"

Hiccup swallowed. "Uh, do you remember what happened last time we were in the ring with a Nadder?"

"Yeah, but last time we were in the ring with the Gronckle it almost ate you, and then you totally beasted it yesterday," I pointed out, scooting a little closer. And if my leg pressed up against hisâ€¦well, so what? "So? What's the plan?"

Hiccup looked nervous. "Uh, wellâ€¦" He thought for a minute. "I guess the first thing we do isâ€¦\_run\_!" Because just then the Nadder ran right towards us. I screamed and ran to the right with Snotlout

while Hiccup and Tuffnut ran to the left. The Nadder cornered and headed straight for me and Snotlout; I jumped behind him and we stood completely still. We were in its blind spot, so it squawked in confusion and blinked. Every time it moved, we moved with it; as long as we could keep this up, we would be good.

"Find a happy place, find a happy place!" Snotlout was whispering.

"Shut up, you moron!" I hissed in his ear. "It can still hear us!"

"How do we get out of this?" he hissed back.

I shrugged. "Kill it?"

We moved with the Nadder again. Snotlout licked his lips. "Okay, next time it movesâ€" He didn't get to finish, because just then something hit the Nadder. I found out later Tuff had stolen Fishlegs's mallet and threw it at the Nadder (seriously, my brother is such a moron), but right then, all I noticed was that the Nadder had turnedâ€"and it was looking right at me and Snotlout. We yelled and split up as it shot at usâ€"so much for killing it. It chased after Snotlout, thank Odin, and I tumbled to a stop beside Tuff, who was hiding behind his shield again. Snotlout got into the Nadder's blind spot again and, when it moved, threw his mace to the side. The Nadder took off after it and Snotlout ran to hide with us. "I hate Nadders. I hate them," he panted.

"Really? I just can't get enough of 'em," I said, rolling my eyes. "I wish we could play peek-a-boo with them all day."

The Nadder started for Astrid now; she grunted and hurled her axe at the dragon, but all it did was bounce off its huge head. She ran out of the way and it headed straight for Hiccup; he must've been in its blind spot, because it stood still for a few seconds. Astrid grabbed her axe back up and let out a war-cry that would make a Valkyrie proud, running towards the Nadderâ€"but it dropped to the ground right before she got to it. There was a long silence before everyone burst into applause. Hiccup grinned sheepishly while we cheered.

"You did it again, cos!" Snotlout whooped, running forward. Me and Tuff ran after him, shoving each other to get to Hiccup first.

"That was so badass!" Tuff tried to say, but I pushed him out of the way.

"I knew you would take it down," I said, giving him my flirtiest grin.

"Uh," Hiccup said.

"All right, all right!" Gobber said, pushing through us. "Give the boy some air!" Some of the other Vikings were leading the Nadder back to its cage; it wasn't putting up much of a fight. Gobber clapped Hiccup on the shoulder. "Excellent work today; class dismissed."

We were all still trying to talk to Hiccup at once when we walked up the ramp and out of the ring; I was trying to ask Hiccup if he wanted

to hang out at Mead Hall with us when two huge arms came out of nowhere and grabbed me and Tuff; we yelped as Uncle Bloodnut pulled us in for a bone-crushing hug. "Ach, there's my dragon slayers!" he roared in our ears.

"Can'tâ€|breatheâ€|" Tuff rasped; Uncle Bloodnut's arm was around his neck.

Uncle Bloodnut let us go, grinning. "You fight just like yer dad, you do," he said to Tuff. Then he turned to me. "And you, lass, have all the makings of a bloodthirsty Valkyrie!" I grinned at the compliment. He leaned in closer so that only I could hear him. "And don't listen to yer brother if he tries to make fun of yer lad; Vikings who can take down dragons that easily never disappoint in the bedroom, or so I'm told," he murmured, winking at me. Normally if a grown manâ€"especially one I was related toâ€"said that to me, I would be totally weirded out, becauseâ€|hello. But since this was Uncle Bloodnut, I just grinned at him again, because you know what? He was probably damn right.

Mom made her way over to us then; she grabbed Tuff and squeezed him embarrassingly tight. "Oh, my brave boy!" she squealed.

"Mooom!" Tuff wailed while me and Uncle Bloodnut pointed and laughed. "This is so not cool! You're ruining my fierce reputation!"

"As what?" I snorted.

Tuff managed to wrestle his way out of Mom's hold and puff out his chest. "I am the world's most deadly weapon," he said in a dramatic voice.

I yanked his helmet over his eyes.

Mom grabbed me and hugged me, too, which was surprising and totally unwanted. "Mom!"

"You're turning into such a strong young lady!" she sniffed. Sniffed. It was very un-Vikingly, if you ask me.

"Uh, thanks," I said awkwardly. "Can you, like, let me go now? People are watching."

"Oh, you," she huffed, letting me go. "Go on and be cool, then!"

"Uh, thanks, we will," Tuff said.

She smacked us both on the back of the heads when we turned to go. We weren't in a real hurry or anythingâ€"we figured we'd meet up with everyone at Mead Hall eventuallyâ€"so we slowed down once we were sure Mom wasn't close enough to walk back with us. This was good because Mom wasn't there to annoy us, but bad because there was nothing to stop my brother from saying, "I didn't think humans could go into heat until today."

I frowned. "What?"

He smirked. "'Oh, Hiccup,'" he moaned in a high-pitched voice that

was supposed to me, adding a few pelvic thrusts for good measure.

"\_You were \_\_so\_\_ brave when you took down that Gronckle! Don't mind my body rubbing against yours! Oh, Hiccup, I just \_\_knew\_\_ you'd take down that dragon; you're \_\_so\_\_ brave and awesome and sexy!\_' Is this gonna be a monthly thing or what?"

I could \_feel\_ my cheeks turning red. "Shut \_up\_!" I groaned, swinging my spear at him, which of course he dodged, cackling. "Like you're any better!"

He frowned. "What?"

Now it was \_my\_ turn to smirk. "'\_Oh, dude,\_' " I said, dropping my voice several octaves and making fun of his voice as much as possible. "'That was \_\_so\_\_ badass, dude! All I did was like, hide behind my shield. You're totally awesome, dude.'\_ Didn't know you rolled that way, bro."

Tuff kicked me. "Shut up, I do not!"

"You sure act like it!" I scoffed.

"I do not!"

"Do too!"

"I'm not gay!"

"Gay!"

"Am \_not\_!"

"Gay, gay, gay!"

"RUFFNUT LIKES HICCUP!"

I dropped my spear and shut him up by socking him in the jaw; we wrestled for about ten minutes. I ended up sitting on his back, holding his leg back. "Say it again, I dare ya," I hissed.

Tuff whimpered.

"That's what I thought," I said happily, letting him go. I rolled off him to sit on the ground, panting a little.

He turned on his side, putting his chin in his hand. He looked like he was thinking again. "You know, you don't have to get embarrassed about it anymore."

I gave him a look. "What?"

"Hiccup," he said. "Your crush on him. It's not lame anymore."

I laughed a little. "You wanna clarify, or did you just hit your head again?"

"I mean, it's actually cool for you to like him now because \_he's\_ cool," Tuff explained. "He's a total badass in dragon training; no one would make fun of you for having a thing for him."

I felt my smile fall right off my face. Hiccup was good. Very good. Better than me, in fact. How was I supposed to impress him now? Even worseâ€"what if other girls started going after him? I could knock out the competition, no problem, but what if Hiccup liked one of them back? Then I was screwed. I could not let that happen; if I wanted to go from being "Ruffnut, Tuffnut's crazy twin sister" to "Ruffnut, Hiccup's hot girlfriend he's totally in love with," I was gonna have to step up my game.

Operation Win Hiccup would have to enter Phase Two: Seduction.

\* \* \*

><p>I was right: by dinnertime, almost everyone had shown up in Mead Hall. Astrid still looked like she wanted to chop someone's head off, and Snotlout wasn't helping.<p>

"I'm totally growing chest hair," he was saying, looking way happy with this development. "You wanna see?"

"Ew, no!" I said, throwing a bone at him.

"It's totally manly," he said, like this was gonna change my mind. Hint: it wasn't.

Astrid snorted into her goblet. "Won't that conflict with your tattoo?"

Snotlout thought about this. "Oh yeah. Huh."

She snorted again.

"I have armpit hair!" Tuff announced, throwing up both his arms to show us.

I leaned away and gagged. "Oh, gross, put those things back down!" I begged, tugging at his arm. "Gods, that smell!"

"I'm not hungry anymore," Astrid said, pushing her plate away and wrinkling her nose. "Ugh."

"You're exaggerating," Tuff huffed.

Astrid stared at him. "No, actually, we're really not."

Someone walked by and I frozeâ€"Hiccup. I looked at the others; they must've seen him too, because Tuff, Snotlout and Fishlegs looked like they were about to get up. I grabbed Tuff's wrist and yanked him back, using his body weight to push me forward; I half-walked, half-ran to the table where Hiccup was sitting and rested my arm on it, leaning in so that my hips were angled just so; I'd seen guys drool over less. Snotlout had jumped into the seat beside Hiccup, and Tuff and Fishlegs and a bunch of other Vikings were crowding their way in around Hiccup, and his eyes got big at all the attention.

"Hey Hiccup, how's it going?" Snotlout was shouting over everyone.

"Oh, uh, great," Hiccup stammered.

"Want me to get some food for you, Hiccup?" I asked.

"I can get you some mead!" Tuff shouted.

Hiccup's eyes got even bigger. "Uh, thanks, Ruff," he squeaked. "Uh, there's already water here, thanks, Tuff."

Tuff frowned and I stuck my tongue out at him; I skipped over to our table and threw two drumsticks and a chunk of bread on the plate. "Hi, Astrid!" I said. She glared. "Bye, Astrid!" I shoved through the crowd and pushed his plate in front of him, grinning. "Here ya go, Hiccup!"

"Oh, thanks," Hiccup said, looking at me a little nervously. I just kept grinning and sat on the table, crossing one leg over the other and leaning back on my hands so that he had to look at me (also it made my chest stick out a little bit, which was always a plus). The boys were glaring at me; they knew that no matter what they did, I was still the only girl there and would get Hiccup's attention fastest. It was one of the only times that having a vagina rules.

"Lad, the last person I knew to take down a Nadder that quickly was Rockhilda Jorgenson" and she's been dead these twenty years!" some old fart said.

"Yeah!" everyone agreed, like any of them actually remembered Rockhilda Jorgenson" she was Hiccup and Snotlout's grandma, if that tells you anything about how long ago she was killing dragons.

"Must be a family trait!" someone else said.

I snorted. "If it's a family trait, Snotlout wouldn't fail so bad in the ring."

This got a lot of people laughing, but Snotlout glared at me. "I don't fail, Ruffnut," he snapped. "Not all of us can take down a Nadder in three seconds."

"It was more like ten or twenty," Hiccup muttered.

"Modest te boot!" another Viking roared happily.

"Ah, that's his mother showin'," Phlegma said wisely. "Ye'd never know Val had graduated top in her class from talkin' to her!"

The others murmured all respectfully the way they always did whenever someone brought up Valhallarma. I don't remember her very well; I was only four when she was killed in a raid, but I remember that she was nice, and Hiccup was always holding onto her.

Hiccup was bright red now. "Umph," he mumbled around a drumstick.

"Do you need anything else?" Tuff asked. "'Cause I can totally go get it for you."

I shoved his head. "I don't mind getting it for you!"

"No, \_I'll\_ do it!" he snapped.

"\_I'll\_ do it!" I jumped off the table, putting my hands on my hips.

"I will!"

"I will!"

"Oh, do shut up," Phlegma scoffed, and she \_picked me up\_ and set me back on the table like I didn't weigh anything. Then she turned to Tuff, who was sticking his tongue out at me, and smacked the back of his head and made him stand where we couldn't reach each other. Seriously, you don't mess with Phlegma the Fierce. She's like, the unofficial village mother. Also, she's a total BAMF when she wants to be.

"I'm fine, really," Hiccup said, still blushing.

"Well, if you need anything, just let me know," I said, winking.

Hiccup looked confused. "Umâ€¦okay."

"So what dragon d'you think we're fighting tomorrow?" Snotlout asked.

"I hope not the Gronckle," Fishlegs muttered.

"What're you gonna do to the dragon tomorrow, Hiccup?" someone asked.

Hiccup actually smiled a little. "Oh, I have a few tricks up my sleeve."

Everybody laughed.

## 9. Spike

A/N: Wow. So...I forgot what it feels like to have a life. It's pretty nice, having stuff to do and places to go and people to hang out with all the time, but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't getting fucked up the ass by some of the requirements for my major. THE POINT IS, updates for this fic are now thrown in the air; I'm aiming for Sundays, since that's when I generally seem to have downtime, but I honestly can't promise anything at this point in time. It's a good thing we're past the halfway point for \_Confessions\_, no?

This chapter introduces one of my favorite characters ever, so be prepared. Just saying.

Jim Povolito-sized thanks to the following for their reviews:

\*\*LeDragonQuiMangeDuPoisson, 4ever2010, Voldyne, xv323, TemariTheWolf, TheodosiaHaddock, Irako of the Desert,\*\* and \*\*123NinjaKat\*\*, and:

\*\*123NinjaKat:\*\* You're making me blush! And unfortunately, no, I don't have any advice other than to keep writing, lol. Have you ever heard of Hugh Howey? He's a published science fiction author and a



good friend of mine, and he says the same thing; keep writing. I love the books, but in a completely different way from the movie; the two are completely different, but I love them both. Which never happens, because usually I love one and hate the other, so I definitely recommend reading the books, if only to warm the cockles of your heart. Ooh, definitely read the HP books when you can; I live in those things. Okay...how does one explain this...Harry is a human, and when Lily died to save him, that put a love shield on him, which protected him from death. So when Voldemort tried to kill him, the curse bounced off of Harry and hit Voldemort and somehow turned Harry into a horcrux. So this sort of gave Harry two lives, if that makes sense; his own life and then one of Voldemort's. I don't know, it's all very weird. And when Voldemort killed him, he killed part of his own soul, because he didn't know Harry was a horcrux. And then Harry was just Harry and not Harry the horcrux. It both makes sense and doesn't, lol. I was Luna for the midnight showing, and I think I'm going as her for Halloween! I do not know, I am sad to report :( Haha, don't worry, I had a Harry Potter nerd-off at a party last night XD Thanks so much for the review!

Hope you guys enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>"Where were you last night?" I asked Astrid the next morning.<p>

She glared at me, swinging her axe. "Oh, so you noticed I left?"

I rolled my eyes. "Gods, is it that time of the month or something?"

I was actually a little bit afraid she was gonna use that axe on me. "No! I'm just annoyed that my friends got up and \_abandoned\_ me last night to hero-worship that loser."

"Hiccup's not a loser," I said, frowning. Then I blushed a little. "At least, not anymore. And besides, you could've come over and said hi, too, you know."

She huffed. "No, I really couldn't have."

I stared. "Well, that made sense. Thanks, Astrid; it would've been really annoying if you hadn't explained what the Hel you were talking about."

She shook her head. "You don't understand."

I put my hands on my hips. "What don't I understandâ€"you're jealous?"

"Why's Astrid jealous?" Tuff wanted to know as he and Snotlout walked in the ring, Fishlegs behind them.

I tossed a braid over my shoulder. "Astrid's jealous that Hiccup's better at dragon training than she is."

Astrid's laugh sounded like a bark. "Oh, \_please\_, Ruff; jealous of Hiccup the \_Useless\_? He might be able to take down dragons \_now\_, but let's not forget who was top in the class \_before\_ the Viking in

him surfaced at the last second."

"Mornin'!" Gobber bellowed from above—"there was an even bigger crowd than yesterday. He frowned. "Where's Hiccup?"

"Here!" Hiccup sprinted in, panting. "Sorry I'm late! I was—I got distracted."

"With what?" Astrid asked suspiciously.

"Never mind that," Gobber said. "Today, you'll be facing a tricky devil—even Hiccup'll have a time with this one!" Some of the Vikings snickered. Astrid smirked. Gobber motioned to Badbreath, who pulled on the lever. The bar came up, but instead of the big double doors opening, a small door that looked like it was made for a cat opened, and out came a green blur. "Meet the Terrible Terror!"

Okay, I'm not even gonna lie—it was the cutest fucking thing I've ever seen. I'd only seen Terrors in swarms before, but never up close. They're adorable. I just wanted to pick it up and cuddle it and keep it. I don't even care how girly that sounds—it was so cute. It was tiny and green and was licking its eyeball, and if you could die of cuteness, I was totally about to. I decided to call him Spike. Yes, I was fucking naming it, is there a problem with that? Me and Snotlout grinned at each other—"this" was what we were fighting today? Tch, I didn't think so. Terrible Terror my ass; the name was probably ironic!

"Ha!" Tuff laughed, pointing at Spike. "It's like the size of my—" Only then Spike flew at his face and attacked him. Me and Snotlout ducked and jumped out of the way while some of the Vikings roared with laughter—"damn" but that thing was fast! He was gnawing on Tuff's nose now, and my brother was screaming, "Oh, get it off!" And then, weirdly, Spike jumped off his face and started chasing something on the ground. "Oh, I am hurt! I am very much hurt!" Tuff wailed, rolling around on the ground and clutching his nose.

I could see now that Spike was chasing around a speck of light, but not just a random speck of light—someone was definitely controlling it. I looked around and saw Hiccup holding his shield so that the light reflected off of it; he pushed the speck towards Spike's cage and the little dragon followed it, grunting and humming the whole way.

"Wow," Tuff said, getting up and rubbing his nose. "He's better than you ever were!"

I couldn't see her face, but I could practically feel Astrid's glare, and it made me smile, because Tuff was damn right; Hiccup had gotten a Terrible Terror back in its cage after maybe one minute. That had to be a record. Spike scrambled into his cage and Hiccup closed the door with his foot; he turned around and gave us a sheepish smile, almost like he was embarrassed that he was so good. The crowd exploded with cheers as Badbreath pulled the lever, dropping the bar.

"Well done, Hiccup!" Gobber shouted, practically dancing. It was a weird dance since he only has one leg. "I've never seen anyone take care of a Terror like that! And you didn't even have to use your axe!"

"That was \_awesome\_" Fishlegs said.

"I almost had it," Tuff lied. His nose was still really red.

"Way to go, Hiccup!" Snotlout whooped.

"How did you know to do that?" I asked, shoving Tuff and Snotlout aside.

Hiccup turned pink. "Instinct?"

Snotlout shoved me out of the way. "Hey, cos, you wanna come by sometime and work out in my basement?"

Hiccup looked really surprised. "Uhâ€|sure, why not?"

Snotlout grinned. "Awesome!"

"We could all work out!" Tuff said, trying to push his way between them. "We can have male bonding time!"

"That would be funâ€|" Fishlegs tried to say, only Tuff cut him off.

"Yeah, I was really just talking about the three of us," he said, glaring and throwing an arm around Hiccup's shoulders.

Snotlout shoved Tuff's arm off of Hiccup and put his own arm there. "Dude, who said you could come?"

Tuff stared. "But Loutâ€|I'm your best \_friend\_."

Snotlout shrugged. "And Hiccup's my cousin. Blood's thicker than water, am I right, cos?"

"You made the first fourteen years of my life miserable," Hiccup pointed out.

I used my hip to bump Snotlout out of the way. "So, we're going to Mead Hall to hang out, if you wanna come with us," I offered, giving him my flirtiest grin.

Hiccup blushed. "Uh, you know, I actually have some things to take care of in the forge, but, uh, I'll meet up with you guys later, okay?" And before we could say anything else, he started half-walking, half-running out the ring. "See you later!"

At this point, I wasn't even going to ask.

I looked around after a minute. "Where's Astrid?"

"She stormed out of here a few minutes ago with her axe," Fishlegs said.

I rolled my eyes. "She needs a hobby, other than dismembering trees."

"Or an orgasm," Tuff sniggered.

I shoved him. "Is that all you ever think about?" Although secretly I was thinking the same thing.

"Yep," Tuff said, nodding. We headed out of the ring and towards the village.

Snotlout smirked. "I could help her there."

I snorted. "Good luck with that."

After a few minutes, Tuff turned to Snotlout. "Dude, why wouldn't I be invited to your basement?"

\* \* \*

><p>We waited around, but Hiccup never showed.<p>

"What do you think he's doing?" Tuff wanted to know.

I'd been wondering that myself. "Training, probably."

"Yeah, but how?" Snotlout piped up. "Astrid goes out to train in the woods like every day after class, and she still can't beat Hiccup."

"Maybe he's training with someone," Fishlegs said.

I frowned. "Who would be training him, though? Almost all of the Vikings who are good at killing dragons went to find the nest."

"Gobber might," Tuff said. "He totally favors Hiccup."

"I can't really see Gobber cheating like that, though," Fishlegs pointed out. "His teaching methods might be a little unorthodox, but they're not illegal."

"Maybe it's just his blood," Snotlout said, wiping his mouth as he set down his goblet. "I mean, look at his dad; the man popped a dragon's head off its shoulders when he was a baby, and Dad says Aunt Valhallarma had a way with dragonsâ€"Hiccup probably got it from them and doesn't need any extra training."

"Okay, but that still doesn't explain what he does all day," Tuff reminded him.

"He has a room in the forge where he sketches inventions," I said without even thinking. I realized the guys were staring at me and I'm pretty sure I turned red. "What?"

Tuff smirked. "Stalker much?"

I know I turned red then. "Shut up! I'm just saying, I saw it that one time I had to go get Dad's axe fixed after someone," I shoved his helmet over his eyes, "almost ruined it!"

"I wouldn't have ruined it if you wouldn't have shoved me into the wall!" he snapped.

"I wouldn't have shoved you if you wouldn't have kicked me!" I

snapped back.

"I wouldn't have kicked you if you wouldn't have bitten me!"

"I wouldn't have bitten you if you wouldn't have pulled my hair!"

"I wouldn't have pulled your hair if you wouldn't have called me a vagina!"

"BECAUSE YOU ARE A VAGINA!" I shouted. A few Vikings turned to stare, but when they saw it was us, they rolled their eyes and turned back to whatever it was they were doing.

"Frigg and Thor, do you two ever stop?" Astrid, who had just walked up, snapped.

"Have you not known us the past fourteen years?" Tuff snorted.

"How was massacring the forest?" I asked.

Astrid rolled her eyes. "Fine."

"We were just talking about Hiccup," Fishlegs said.

Astrid tensed. "Oh really?"

"Yup," Snotlout said, just as clueless as Fishlegs. Seriously, did these guys not see the Look of Death in her eyes whenever they said his name? "What do you think he does all day?"

"Who cares?" she practically spat. "We never cared beforeâ€"why do we care now?"

"PMS," Tuff whispered to Snotlout.

Astrid glared. "What was that?"

"Nothing," Tuff said quickly. "Nothing at all, why would you think that was anything?" But he could tell it wasn't working, since Astrid was still glaring, so he got up and stretched. "Well, gee, I think I'm gonna turn in."

"Yeah, me too," Snotlout said, jumping up.

"Me three," Fishlegs said, and the three of them bolted out of the hall. Cowards.

"Boys," Astrid huffed.

"Who peed in your oats this morning?" I snorted.

Astrid glared. "If I have to say his name, I may barf."

I rolled my eyes because I knew what she was going to rant about. "What did he do this time?"

"I just ran into him by the forge," she said, practically biting into the words. "He justâ€|\_ugh\_, he is so weird! Why does everyone like him? He was standing by the forge and stuttering and being allâ€|\_ugh\_â€|and then he just disappeared inside!"

I stared. "Um."

"I'm telling you, Ruff, it was so weird!" she said, like I hadn't heard her say it the first five times. "It's like something was pulling him—he was on the ground, and then he was flat against the doors, and then it was like something yanked him through the doors, but when I looked inside, he was gone!"

"Maybe he's just awesome like that," I said, shrugging. And she thought I exaggerated when I told stories. Puh.

Astrid scowled. "He is not that awesome," she growled. "He's not even kind of awesome. He's a loser, Ruff. Hiccup the Useless, remember?"

I rolled my eyes. "You're taking this dragon training thing way too seriously, Astrid. So somebody finally beat you at something, so what?"

"That's not the point!" she almost screamed, but you could totally tell it was the point. "The point is that Hiccup is probably more dangerous to Berk than dragons are, but just because he knocked over a few reptiles, now everyone treats him like a hero, including you! Am I the only one who remembers that this is Hiccup? That we could've salvaged almost all our supplies in the last raid if he hadn't gotten in the way? That he's such a screw-up his own father hasn't even bothered teaching him how to lead because Snotlout would be a better chief than Hiccup?"

I stood up. "Look, I love you and all, but I don't really wanna put up with you right now. I'll see you tomorrow, okay?" How the Hel was I supposed to explain to her that I was just as crazy about that Hiccup, the screw-up, as I was about this Hiccup, the hero? She would never get it, and I was not about to bend over backwards trying to make her.

Astrid looked surprised and pissed. "Fine," she mumbled, reaching for her goblet. "See you."

"Bye." I felt a little bad for leaving her—but then I saw her attack her bread and felt a little less bad about it.

## 10. Welcome Home

A/N: OH DEAR LORD. Okay. Wow. So a lot of...stuff happened this week. So, three times in the last couple months, my computer would randomly shut down and then restart with a black screen, saying, "Internal hard drive cannot be found." Which is, you know, really bad, and while I could always get it to work normally later, it's still not the kind of thing you want to keep happening, so after this happened on Wednesday, I took it to the IT guys on Thursday. Chris from tech support called a few hours later and said that the good news was that it was a formatting issue, so I wouldn't have to buy a new hard drive or, worse, get a new laptop, which I was afraid of. The bad news was that he would have to reformat the entire laptop, which means that he would have to wipe it clean and erase any programs I'd added onto it, and even though he said he would save my documents...they were not saved. Basically, if I hadn't been smart and backed all my stuff up

earlier, I would be a sad, sad panda. I did lose chapter 12 of It's All Gleek to Me, though, so I'm kind of bummed about that. ANYHOO. Moral of the story is, ALWAYS BACK UP YOUR WORK. ALL OF IT. Because you never know when your computer will randomly freak out and announce that it can't find its own damn hard drive.

NEXT ORDER OF BUSINESS. Anonymous reviews have been disabled. Possibly permanently. This was done for a number of reasons; I'm really sorry for the people who haven't been abusing the anonymous review feature, but some fucktards have been messing it up for you and I'm sick of it. So...yeah. That's that.

So. Onto chapter-related things. This is quite possibly my favorite chapter, so I hope you guys enjoy it, too. It does tread a little bit on the "whaaaat did she really do that?" side, but it all plays an important later, I promise.

Finally, huge thanks to **\*\*LeDragonQuiMangeDuPoisson**, almne, TemariTheWolf, Catnip-Packet, xv323, Irako of the Desert, 123NinjaKat, **\*\*and \*\*Darned4AllEternity\*\*** for their reviews! And to the anons:

**\*\*Irako of the Desert:\*\*** Thanks so much! And you are so welcome; if people take the time to leave a kind review, I can certainly take the time to properly thank them! Thanks so much for the review!

**\*\*123NinjaKat:\*\*** Writing Ruff and Tuff was prooobably my favorite part of writing this, haha; they have great banter XD D'aww, thanks! lol, I don't know about Ruffnut being too good for him...he is a boy, after all, and they're not the most observant of creatures XD To be fair, Hiccup has no idea Ruffnut has a thing for him, and when she hits on him, all he's thinking about it is escaping the crowd and getting to Toothless, so his head isn't all there. Also you have to take into account that he's never had a girl like him before, so he doesn't know what it looks like when one's making a move on him. I'm sure if he knew Ruffnut liked him to the extent that she does, he'd behave MUCH differently XD No, no, I could totally go on about it for hours too-obviously,ahaha. Seriously, you ever wanna talk Harry Potter or Ruffcup...just hit me up XD lol, sorry, it's confusing to the die-hard fans, too...okay, a horcrux is basically a piece of someone's soul, right? So Harry is a human horcrux, which means that he has two souls; his own and then Voldemort's. So when Voldemort does "Avada Kedavra", he killed off his own soul, but even though he killed off his own soul, it was still part of Harry, so Harry was momentarily "killed". Does that make any sense? It's one of those things that I understand but cannot for the life of me put into coherent words.

Long author's note is long. Enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>By the next morning, I wasn't even paying attention to the Vikings who came to watch our classesâ€”nearly the whole village had turned out, yeah, but I knew they were there to see Hiccup, not me. Astrid still looked like she had a stick up her ass, so I didn't talk to her; in fact, I stayed as far away from her as I could in case I accidentally pissed her off and she decided to, like, decapitate me or something. Hey, it could happen. Once everyone was there, Gobber

said, "This is your last lesson before your exam; tomorrow, you'll face the Gronckle one last time and the Elder will choose who will kill the Monstrous Nightmare!" We looked at each other; everyone knew it was gonna be Hiccup. "Today, you'll be facing the Terrible Terror again."<p>

"We're facing it \_again\_?" Tuff yelled, his hand flying to his nose.

I smirked. "Aww, Tuffy-wuffy afwaid of a widdle Tewwible Tewwow?"

"Tuffy-wuffy's about to kick your ass," he snapped.

"All right, all right," Gobber said before I could say anything. "Remember, \_focus\_; they don't call it the Terrible Terror because it's cute and fluffy. Everyone ready?" When we all said sure, why the Hel not, he motioned to Badbreath, who pulled the lever and opened the cage. Spike (yep, I was still calling him that) skittered out and stared up at us. We stared back.

"It's so tiny, and we have to fight itâ€¦I don't know if I can do that morally," Snotlout said, lowering his mace.

Spike growled and spat flames at him.

"Watch him; he's a tricky little bugger!" Gobber shouted. "He may look harmless, but he's a nasty thing!"

Spike stretched his wings and shot into the air; he started diving at us, hissing and spitting flames when he had a clear shot. Fishlegs screamed like a girl and ran around the ring, which I think just made him an even bigger target, and Snotlout kept throwing things at Spike, which was probably just as ineffective, while the rest of us ducked under our shields and the grownups laughed their asses off. Jerks.

"If I could just lure him closerâ€¦" Astrid muttered, gripping her axe.

I shoved her axe to the sideâ€¦"she couldn't use that on Spike! "Don't hurt him!"

"Why not?" Astrid asked, looking at me like I'd grown an extra head.

"Ruff thinks it's \_cute\_," Tuff snorted.

"You do?" Hiccup asked, looking surprised.

I could feel my cheeks turning pink; Hiccup would think I was a total loser now. "Well, he is!" I huffed. I didn't even look at Astridâ€¦"she was probably glaring daggers at me.

"It's a little package of evil!" Tuff said. "And you named it \_Spike\_, like it's a \_pet\_!"

"He is the cutest fucking thing I've ever seen; I will not be ashamed of this!" I snapped.



Hiccup had a funny look on his face. "Hang on a sec." I watched him angle his shield towards the sun; in about two seconds, Spike had landed on it, scrabbling at the metal. Hiccup slowly lowered his shield and reached for the Terror; he scratched Spike's neck and the weirdest thing happened. Spike stopped gnawing on the shield; his eyelids drooped and his mouth fell open, and it reminded me a lot of when you scratch a dog or my brother behind the ears. Then Hiccup reached his finger under Spike's chin and the little guy went limp. Hiccup scooped him off the shield and held him like he was a cat or something and not a dragon. And the weirdest part? I'm pretty sure Spike was purring. Then Hiccup walked over to me. "You wanna pet him?"

I stared at him for a minute. Hiccup was holding Spike. And he was asking if I wanted to \_pet\_ him. I mean, yes, butâ€¦\_whoa\_. "Are you serious?"

He blushed, and I gotta say, the image of a blushing Hiccup holding a sleeping Terrible Terror is too fucking cute for words. "He's knocked out; he won't hurt you, I promise."

I hesitated before reaching out and rubbing my fingers over Spike's head; it was scaly, of course, but it was weirdly soft and warm. I kind of liked it. Spike hummed and I scratched him behind the horns; cats and dogs liked it, so why shouldn't dragons?

"Holy \_shit\_," Tuff said behind me.

"Careful, Ragnhild!" someone shouted to Mom. "She'll be wanting a leash for it soon!"

Everyone roared with laughter. I looked up at Hiccup, who had this huge smile on his face. He blushed when he realized I was looking at him, though, and my heart flip-flopped really hard. Gods, why was he soâ€¦Hiccup?

"Can I touch it?" Snotlout asked.

"Sure," Hiccup said. So everyone (except for Astrid, who looked like she was trying to strangle her axe) petted Spike, including my brother.

"Ha, he's like a kitten!" Tuff said. Spike burped a little flame and Tuff jumped behind me for cover.

"All right, Hiccup, when you've finished showin' off, if yeh wouldn't mind puttin' the Terror back?" Gobber droned. I scratched Spike's belly one more time (just so you know, Terrors apparently love having their belly scratched) before Hiccup carried him back to his cage and sent him inside.

"For being so evil, they're really kind of cute," Snotlout said. He had this totally dopey look on his face. Not that I looked much better, I'm sure.

"It's a trap; they use their cuteness to lull you into a false sense of security, and then when you let your guard down, they attack!" Fishlegs said as we walked out of the ring.

Tuff snorted. "Says the guy who was using baby-talk."

Fishlegs blushed. "They're harmless when they're asleep," he mumbled.

I fell back so I was walking beside Hiccup. "Thanks," I muttered.

He looked up. "For what?"

I shrugged. "For, you knowâ€¦catching Spike and letting me pet him." I felt my cheeks turn red. "I mean, for catching the Terrible Terror."

Hiccup smiled. "He looks like a Spike."

Cheeks were getting redder. "Umph," I managed.

Before I could say anything else, Tuff nudged me; Astrid was standing in front of Gobber, hands on her hips. "That wasn't a lesson! That wasâ€¦show-and-tell! We didn't learn anything, except that Terrors apparently like to have their stomachs scratched; that'll be so useful when a swarm of them are attacking the village!"

Gobber put his hand on her shoulder. "Astrid. Calm down. Hiccup knocked out the Terror and no one got hurt, and considering this lot, that's a blessing in and of itself; just let it go, lass."

Astrid actually stomped her foot. I couldn't hear the rest of their conversation, though, because Mom and Uncle Bloodnut came up to me and Tuff just then. "Phlegma wasn't kidding; that boy certainly does have a way with dragons!" Mom said.

"Just like his mother," Uncle Bloodnut said. He would knowâ€¦he was in dragon training with Valhallarma.

"Mom, can we get a Terrible Terror?" I asked, crossing my fingers behind my back.

Mom snorted. "Oh, aye, and maybe we'll get a Night Fury in a year or two!"

"But Mom, they're so cute!" I whined. "And they're tiny, so they don't take up much space, and I would take care of itâ€¦"

"It is a dragon, Ruffnut Thorston, and I am not having one of those beasts under my roof," Mom said in that we-are-not-talking-about-this-anymore-so-shut-up voice. I felt my shoulders sag. They were dragons, sure, but they didn't seem like dragons. They were more likeâ€¦lizards who have dragonesque tendencies or something. Why did we have to kill them?

"Ha!" Tuff said obnoxiously. I yanked his helmet over his eyes.

When we finally got away from Mom (look, I love my mom, justâ€¦not when I'm around her), me and Tuff met up with Snotlout, Astrid, and Fishlegs by the bridge. "So, Mead Hall?"

"Sounds good to me," Fishlegs said.

I looked around and frowned. "Where's Hiccup?"

Astrid huffed. "Why does it matter?"

I raised my eyebrows. "Uh, because he's our friend. Just because someone finally beat you at something doesn't mean you have to be such a bitch about it."

Tuff and Snotlout went, "Ooooh."

Astrid scowled. "I am not being a bitch."

I folded my arms over my chest; I was getting really, really sick of this. "Wanna bet?"

Astrid put her hands on her hips. "Yeah, I do!"

"Kiss her!" Tuffnut hissed.

"Take her shirt off!" Snotlout shouted.

Me and Astrid forgot we were fighting and turned to stare at them. Then we looked at each other. Then we reached for them, only they ran down the bridge. We tore after them, threatening to tear off their heads and their balls and other things. They lost us around Black Heart Bay, and we finally flopped down on the ground, panting for breath.

"Assholes," I groaned.

"I don't think it helps their egos that the two hottest girls on the island were chasing them," Astrid gasped.

"We can always get 'em back," I said.

"How?" she wanted to know.

"Accidentally push 'em in front of a dragon," I said. Astrid laughed; it felt good to hear that from her again, especially after the mood she'd been in the last few days. I rolled over to look at her. "Sorry for calling you a bitch."

She shrugged. "It's okay; I deserved it." She sat up, fiddling with her axe. "I justugh." Translation: I have a problem with competition and I can't stand that Hiccup the Useless is beating me at the most important thing in my life, and I'm taking out my frustration on everyone around me.

I understood, though, and threw an arm around her shoulders. "Friends?"

She smiled and put her arm around my back. "Friends."

There was some whistling and cat-calling behind us; we turned around and saw Snotlout and Tuff smirking at us.

"You know, ladies, we can continue this in my basement," Snotlout said in what he probably thought was a very suave voice.

Me and Astrid looked at each other before chasing them around the island again.

\* \* \*

><p>After me and Astrid had given Tuff and Snotlout a few bruises, I made Tuff give me a piggyback ride home. He kicked open the door and I let out a scream and jumped off his back. "DAD!"<p>

Dad was sitting at the table; he stood up when I ran in and picked me up and swung me around like I didn't weigh anything. "There's my little Valkyrie!" he boomed. Then he set me down and grabbed up Tuff and they made manly, happy grunting noises that I guess mean "Hey, how's it going, good to see you" or something.

"Did you find the nest?" we wanted to know, plunking down on either side of him at the table.

He shook his head, taking a swig of ale. "Nah; we came close, though. Stoick was all in favor of continuin' the search, but we were runnin' low on supplies and one of the ships was hit pretty bad by a Nightmare. There won't be time for another quest before the ice sets in; we'll go again in the spring."

"Maybe we'll come with you," I said.

Dad beamed. "Aye, that's right, you two are almost full-fledged Vikings now! How's dragon training?"

I don't know if Dad actually understood us because we kept talking over each other, going on and on about how we almost got killed by the Gronckle and how the Zippleback was totally wicked and how Tuff almost got us killed by the Nadder and how I named the Terrible Terror Spike and he was the cutest thing in the whole wide world (only Tuff said it was pure evil) and how Gobber was \_crazy\_ and how Hiccup was top in the class.

"Aye, I heard about that," Dad said when we stopped for breath. "Who would've thought it of little Hiccup Haddock!"

"Ruffâ€" "

"Shut \_up\_, Tuff!" I hissed, because I knew \_exactly\_ what my idiot brother was gonna say.

Dad looked between us. "What's this?"

"Nothing," I said, glaring at Tuff. "It'sâ€|nothing."

Dad looked at me. "So this has nothing to do with what Bloodnut told me today?"

I frowned. "What'd he tell you?"

Dad took a swig of ale and wiped his mouth. "Bloodnut said yer sweet on the boy."

I turned bright red while Tuff sniggered. Mom perked up. "Hiccup Haddock? Oh, that'd be a fine match, that would; imagine our little Ruffy, married to the chief's boyâ€|"

"\_Mom\_!" I yelled, covering my face.

"\_Hiccup and Ruffnut sittin' in a tree\_," Tuff started to sing.  
"\_K-I-S-S-I-N-G!\_"

"Dad, make him stop!" I whined.

"Tuffnut, stop mortifying your sister," Dad said.

"It's not mortifying, it's just annoying," I huffed.

Tuff smirked. "So it wouldn't bother you if I asked how it felt to, heh, pet his dragon today?"

I turned red again and lunged over the table for him; my hands were almost at his throat, but Dad caught me and yanked me back. "Ruffnut, don't kill yer brother, and Tuffnut, none of those jokes at the table!"

"But you have to admit, that was pretty good," Tuff said as Dad pushed me back into my seat.

Dad's beard twitched. "Aye, it was, at that."

"Oh, you!" Mom scolded. "You're just encouragin' him!"

"He's a boy; his mind would be there without my encouragin'," Dad said, smacking her butt when she walked by. Um, gross. I mean, I'm glad my parents are still in love or whatever and don't fight all the time, butâ€|ew. But then he frowned. "You two haven't been givin' yer mother trouble while I've been away, have ye?"

"No," we said at the same time.

Dad looked at Mom, who shrugged. "They're never in the house long enough te get in me hair."

Dad nodded. "Good, good."

"Daddy," I said, seeing that we weren't in trouble or anything, "can we pleasepleaseplease get a Terrible Terror?"

"Oh my \_gods\_," Tuff groaned, dropping his head on the table.

Dad snorted. "Now why would yeh want one of those, yeh silly girl?"

I gave him the Eyesâ€|he can almost never refuse them. "Because they're so \_cute\_. Daddy, Hiccup got hold of the one in the ring today and I got to pet him, and he's like a little scaly kitten, and he was so \_adorable\_, and I could train him and I would take care of him and I would never ask for anything ever again, \_pleeease?\_" I said in one breath. It was pretty impressive, I'm not even gonna lie.

Dad was having trouble saying noâ€|"I could tell. "Ah, Ruff, you don't want a Terrorâ€|those things are little devils."

"Not if you train 'em!" I whined.

"Ruffnut!" Mom snapped. "We have already had this discussion! No dragons in this house!"

"But it's not really a dragon if you think about it," I said. "They're like lizards. And I mean, yeah, okay, so they breathe fire and can fly, but when you compare 'em to Monstrous Nightmares, they're a lot less dragonly."

Mom and Dad had a staring contest. Dad was losing. I wasn't sure what he was losing, but he was definitely not coming out on top. "How's about this," he finally said, looking away from Mom really fast. "You manage te catch one and tame it, and I'll consider lettin' yeh keep it."

"\_WHAT?\_" Tuff yelped.

I squealed and threw my arms around my dad's neck. "Thank you, thank you, thank you! I love you so much, you're the best dad in the whole wide world, I'll never ask for anything ever again!"

"Yes you will, you dirty liar," Dad snorted, but he hugged me back anyway.

"This is so not cool!" Tuff whined.

"I agree," Mom said, her voice sounding like ice. I had an idea I knew what Dad had lost in that staring contest. Let me put it this way: I didn't think I'd have to worry about any new brothers or sisters anytime soon, if ya know what I mean.

\* \* \*

><p>After dinner (which we had at home for once, since Dad was there), Mom cleaned up while me, Tuff and Dad sat around the fire. Dad took the chair, Tuff sat on the floor, and I sat in my dad's lap; I know it sounds really babyish, but hey, as long as I could still fit, why the Hel not? Although if you tell anyone I still sit in my dad's lap, you can kiss your tongue goodbye, because I'll be cutting it out, mmkay.<p>

"I'm proud of yeh both," Dad said. "I really am. Not everyone can fight dragons; you look around, you'll find that every family's had at least one screw-up who stuck to baking bread or fishing or rebuilding houses. Not the Thorstons; there's never been a member of our family who didn't take up a sword against a dragon." He was quiet for a minute. "Did I ever tell you about my sister, Duffnut?"

I shrugged. "You mentioned her a few times."

Dad was quiet for another minute. "She was a sweet girl; she was always following Bloodnut and me, wanting to play with us." He smiled. "Sometimes we let her. Valhallarma liked her; just about everybody did." His smile slipped. "She died when she was thirteen. There was another dragon attack on the village—we found her body—" He trailed off and stared at the fire. I wasn't sure if I should hug him or not; would that just make him more upset? After a minute, he cleared his throat. "Every dragon I've ever killed since then has been for her. Every time I face a dragon, I think, this is the one that killed Duff. I used te fight dragons because it's what Vikings do—now, I fight them for her." He looked at me and Tuff for a long minute. "I hope you both never have a reason beyond being a Viking te fight them."

I felt my skin prickle. I knew Aunt Duffnut had been killed years ago by dragons, but I'd never really thought about it like that, you know? It made a lot more sense, though, how Dad and Uncle Bloodnut were two of the best dragon killers on the island and how Dad had made me and Tuff stick together whenever there was a dragon raid.

Mom cleared her throat. "Tuffnut, we could use more firewood." We all knew what it meant: Mom could handle getting more wood herself, but she wanted to distract Dad from talking too long about Aunt Duffnut.

Dad got up. "Aye. Tuff'll help me. Ruff, isn't there some laundry hanging out te dry?" He winked.

I grinned back at him. "Oh yeah! I'll go get it."

The minute we were outside, Dad turned to us. "All right, let me see 'em." Me and Tuff pulled off our sleeves and held out our wrists. Dad laughed while he looked at them. "Bloodnut wasn't lyin'; these are damn good! My fierce little Vikings!"

"What's goin' on out there?" Mom asked from inside.

"Nothin'!" Dad shouted back while me and Tuff shoved our sleeves back on. "Absolutely nothin'." He put his hands on our shoulders and leaned in. "I'm only gonna say this once: I think they're great, but if yer mother finds out, I've never seen 'em before, are we clear?"

Tuff pretended to crack a whip.

"You just wait until you're married, and then we'll see who's laughin', boy," Dad snapped.

## 11. Mazel Tov

A/N: Y HELLO THAR. So, yes, this is a little late; I had a busybusybusy weekend that I couldn't sum up if I tried.

Just a note about last chapter: several reviews mentioned that it was nice to meet Tuffnut Sr. for the first time. lol. Guys. He was in chapters 2 and 3. I know it's been a while, but he was there, I promise.

Notes about this chapter: The rules that Gobber gives the kids about the exam were completely made up off the top of my head; I didn't get them from any canon or fanon source, and I'm not claiming to, so don't bother copying me, and don't bother bitching about it. k? k. Also, guess what? This fic? HAS REACHED OVER 100 REVIEWS. OHEMGEE THANK YOU GUYS SO MUCH. \*flapflapflap\* SERIOUSLY, THANK YOU SOOOOO MUCH! I am a happy, happy panda. \*more flapping\*

MUCHAS MUCHAS GRACIAS to the lovely people who reviewed last chapter: \*\*Catnip-Packet, Voldyne, Drake Harris, TemariTheWolf, BlackShadowedMoon, LeDragonQuiMangeDuPoisson, xv323, Irako of the Desert, \*\*and \*\*Darned4AllEternity\*\*. Seriously, you guys=awesome.

Enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>Over half the village was there for the exam the next day. I knew Hiccup was gonna end up taking down the Gronckle, but I still felt like I was gonna upchuck my breakfast; Dad was watching, and I wanted him to be proud of me, especially now that I knew why killing dragons was so important to him. I could tell Tuff felt the same way because he wasn't saying a whole lot and his face looked kind of white. Hiccup actually looked a lot like Tuff; he kept fixing his helmet (I guess it was a present from his dad or something) and taking shaky breaths. Fishlegs muttered numbers under his breath until I finally told him I was gonna sew his lips shut. Astrid had this crazy look in her eyes while she turned her axe over and over in her handsâ€”I thought she'd finally cracked. The only person who looked excited was Snotlout, who ran down the ramp going, "WHOO, who's ready to kill some Gronckle?"<p>

We groaned at him.

Snotlout slapped Hiccup on the back. "I bet it's gonna be you!"

"I may throw up on you," Hiccup muttered.

Gobber stumped down the ramp after a few minutes, grinning. "Mornin'!" he bellowed. "Today is yer exam; whoever takes down the Gronckle will get te kill the Monstrous Nightmare tomorrow in front of the entire village!"

"WHOO!" Snotlout shouted, trying to high-five me and Tuff. I stared at him.

Gobber held his hands (well, technically his hand and hook, but whatever) behind his back and paced up and down in front of the door. "Before I let you out, let me lay down the rules. Everyone is te have one weapon and one shield; during the course of the exam, you may not get another weapon or shield. You are only allowed te participate as long as you have one of either; the minute you are both weaponless and missing a shield, you're out. When you're out, you'll come wait with me until the exam is over. You are allowed te work together, but only one person can kill the Nightmare, so only one of you will win; just be warned that even if you divide the work evenly, the Elder will decide who wins." He looked at me and Tuff when he said that part. Like he had to worry about me and Tuff dividing anything equally. "There will be barriers, but this does not mean you are allowed te hide behind them the whole time and pitch in at the last minute. If you slack off, I will come in and get you.

"I can come in at any time and take out any of you, for that matter, so don't do anything you think would get you disqualified. When the Gronckle is down, the exam will be over and the Elder will decide who will get to kill the Monstrous Nightmare; it might not, I repeat, might not, be the person who took down the Gronckle. So remember yer training and do yer best." Gobber jabbed a finger towards the sky. "You all have an audience todayâ€”not just the Elder and a few bored Vikings with nothing better to do. Use what you've learned, and don't just make me proudâ€”make the village



proud."

"So no pressure or anything," Tuff muttered in my ear.

"Everyone ready?" Gobber asked.

We groaned again and Gobber threw open the door. I saw my dad and ripped my eyes away; if I looked at him, I was gonna get even more nervous, and if I got more nervous, I was gonna hurl, and if I hurled—well, I didn't wanna hurl. Gobber motioned to Badbreath and the six of us gripped our weapons and our shields. I glanced at Tuff; he blew out a deep breath and shrugged. The door banged open and everyone jumped out of the way; the Gronckle zigzagged around the ring and roared. It came straight for me and Tuff and we split apart, jumping behind two different barriers; it zoomed over us and started chasing Fishlegs (at least, I'm assuming it was chasing Fishlegs, since I heard his girly scream). I could hear Astrid snapping at Snotlout from the barrier ahead of me.

"I am not dating you, so stop asking!"

"Astrid, please, we're the two hottest people on the island; it just makes sense, you know? Think of what beautiful children we would have."

"I hate kids, and I'm definitely not having yours."

"Ast\_riiiiiid\_!" Snotlout whined.

"You're distracting me."

"Oho, I distract you, do I?"

"\_Snotlout\_."

"Okay, okay, look, how about if I take down the Gronckle today, you go out with me?"

Astrid was quiet for so long that I actually stood on my knees and peeked over the barrier to get a look at her face. She was staring at him. Then she smirked. "Okay."

Mine and Snotlout's mouths fell open.

"Really?" Snotlout breathed.

"You take down that Gronckle and kill that Monstrous Nightmare, and I'll go out with you," Astrid said. She folded her arms over her chest.

Snotlout had this totally dopey look on his face. "Wow. Okay. Wow." He was so busy looking like a sap, in fact, that he didn't see the Gronckle coming up behind him, so I decided to warn him.

"Hey Snotty," I said, jerking my head at the Gronckle. "Here's your chance."

Snotlout turned around while Astrid used her shield to somersault behind my barrier; Snotlout fell backwards and the Gronckle lunged forward. It opened its jaws and I actually let out a scream because,

hello, there was a dragon about to eat my friend, but Snotlout squirmed and the Gronckle's jaws snapped down on his shield. He scooted back and then climbed to his feet while the Gronckle finished eating his shield; it started for him again, so he threw his mace and hit it right between the eyes. The Gronckle blinked and looked totally surprised, and for a minute, I thought it was about to pass out. But then it growled and shot at him, and he yelped and ran towards Gobber.

"Snotlout, you're out!" Gobber announced, like no one had already figured it out.

"You, my friend, are evil," I said to Astrid.

She scoffed. "Oh, come on, Ruff; like he stood a chance against that Gronckle. Speaking of which—" The Gronckle was headed for us now. He—"or she—"whatever—"couldn't see us, which gave us an advantage. If I could take it by surprise and attack it, I might be able to make it out alive, maybe even kill the Monstrous Nightmare tomorrow. Hey, it could happen. I left my shield on the ground and gripped my spear; I waited until it was right in front of us before I jumped up and hurled the spear at it.

Only the Gronckle caught the spear in its mouth and clamped down on it so that it \_broke my fucking spear\_. Great. It was too late to hide now, too, and it would probably eat me or roast me in the time it took to reach down and grab my shield, so I ran for it. I heard a roar and turned around; Astrid had thrown her shield at the Gronckle, who was spinning around all dizzy now. "Go!" she shouted, disappearing behind a barrier.

I ran for the wall where Gobber and Snotlout were sitting and skidded to a stop, panting. "I hate Gronckles."

"Good try, though," Snotlout said moodily, bumping my fist when I slumped down next to him.

"Yeah, you too," I muttered. I looked up at where Dad was standing; he smiled at me and gave me a thumbs-up, and it was so corny that I stopped feeling pissed at myself and smiled back at him. I hadn't even gotten comfortable when Tuff's spear came out of nowhere and bounced off the Gronckle—"fail. The Gronckle roared and shot at where the spear had come from, and two seconds later Tuff came running towards the wall, shouting. He threw himself down on the ground when he reached us and said a few things that made Gobber stop watching the exam and reach over and slap him on the back of the head ("This isn't Rudery Class, boy!").

"Stupid dragons," Tuff muttered, fixing his helmet.

It was quiet for a few minutes, and then Astrid stood up and threw her axe at the Gronckle with a scream. It bounced off its ugly head, though, and the Gronckle headed straight for her; Astrid ducked down and, a second later, my shield came flying out a few feet from where she'd been a minute before.

"Hey, that's my shield!" I yelled while the Gronckle blasted it. Astrid rolled and grabbed her axe and then disappeared behind the barriers again. It went on like this for a while; Hiccup, Astrid, or Fishlegs would try to attack the Gronckle and then hide before it

could get them, and all they were doing was pissing it off; they weren't even using up its shot limit since it kept eating their shields. It chased Fishlegs around the ring after it crushed his mallet and he finally dropped down beside usâ€”now it was just Hiccup and Astrid.

Astrid kept flipping from barrier to barrier; I could tell she was getting antsy. After a minute, she hurtled over a barrier and let out her war cry, holding up her axe and running towards the Gronckle; I was so busy watching her that I didn't even notice what Hiccup was doing until she stopped. I looked over at Hiccup and saw him ducking by his barrier; his helmet, shield, and axe were on the ground, and so was the Gronckle. Everyone burst into cheers; I could see Astrid swinging her axe and spitting like an angry cat, but I was too busy cheering with everyone else. Gobber got up and went to stand with Hiccup and Astrid; she was holding her axe up to his throat, which was just a little extreme, if you ask me.

"Okay, quiet down!" Stoick shouted from above. He looked a lot happier than I'd ever seen him beforeâ€”probably because his son wasn't a total screw-up like he'd always thought. "The Elder has decided."

Everyone shut up at that. We watched Gobber hold his hook over Astrid's head, and everyone's eyes shot to the Elder; she shook her head, and a lot of people went, "Ooooh." Gobber pointed to Hiccup, and I looked at the Elder; she smiled and nodded, pointing at him, and everyone cheered again. Me, Tuff, Snotlout, and Fishlegs ran up, cheering with everybody else.

"Oh, you've done it, you've done it, Hiccup; you get to kill the dragon!" Gobber shouted, squeezing Hiccup. Snotlout and Fishlegs tossed Hiccup onto Fishlegs's shoulder while me and Tuff jumped up and banged our helmets together, whooping.

"Yeah!" I shouted, punching the air. I forgot all about how completely embarrassing it'd been that I'd gotten out so early in the test or how mad I was that the Gronckle had eaten my best spear or how upset I was that I hadn't been able to make my dad proud; Hiccup was the most popular guy on the island and was about to become the youngest person on the island to kill a dragonâ€”and not just any dragon, but a Monstrous Nightmareâ€”and I was gonna make him mine.

\* \* \*

><p>After we had lunch in Mead Hall, me, Tuff, and Snotlout decided that we needed to have a party the next day after Hiccup killed the Nightmare.<p>

"We need a lot of booze," Tuff decided, wiping his mouth. "And chicks."

I rolled my eyes. "Um, right, because you'd have any luck with the three girls our age anyway?"

He glared at me. "I'm a total stud! You just don't see it 'cause we're related."

"No, but I sure see that you're a dumbass," I snorted.

"I'm a total stud!"

"We should ask Astrid," I said, but then I realized she wasn't there. I frowned. "Where is Astrid?"

"She left almost right after Hiccup," Fishlegs said.

Tuff blinked. "Whoa, Hiccup's gone too?"

Snotlout looked around. "Dude, where does he go?"

"Probably the woods; that's why no one runs into him," Tuff said thoughtfully.

"He's probably practicing for tomorrow," Fishlegs said with this excited look on his face.

"Uh, question: how does one practice killing a giant dragon that can set itself on fire in the woods?" Snotlout snorted. Fishlegs's face fell.

"Ask Astrid; she kills the woods all the time," I said, rolling my eyes.

Tuff and Snotlout roared with laughter.

\* \* \*

><p>After dinner, I sat on Dad's lap again. "Are you upset?"<p>

Dad gave me a funny look. "Upset?"

"For me being the second one out," I explained. I'd been thinking about it all day; I know Snotlout had failed majorly by being the first one out and Spitelout was probably getting a ton of flak from everyone else, but it's not like being the next person out was much better.

Dad frowned. "Now, you listen here, lass; you did a fine job today, second out or no, and I'm just as proud of yeh as if you'd been chosen by the Elder to kill the Monstrous Nightmare tomorrow."

"You're just saying that 'cause you're my dad," I muttered.

"I'm not a liar, Ruffnut Thorston, and I'll thank you te remember that," he snorted. "Now you just cheer up, lass; Hiccup's big day is tomorrow, and I don't want you poutin' during it."

"Yessir," I sighed.

Dad twisted around in his seat to make sure Mom wasn't looking; then he leaned over and shoved his jug of mead at me. "Here, it'll make yeh feel better."

"Okay!" I said, taking a swig out of it. I mean, hello, it's not every day your dad just gives you mead, you know?

"Not all of it! You want yer mother te smell it on yeh?" he hissed,

yanking the jug away from me. "She'll skin both our hides."

"Dad, you're so whipped that it would be funny if it wasn't so sad," I told him.

"Aye, I know," he said miserably. "I fell in love with her when she was a beautiful spitfire" next thing I knew, she was chasin' me with an axe and threatenin' te cut off me balls fer knockin' her up."

"What're you two talkin' about over there?" Mom asked suspiciously.

"How you have Dad totally whipped," I said.

"I certainly do," Mom said in this totally proud voice. She snorted. "You could learn a thing or two from yer old lady."

I stared at her. And you know what? She was totally right. My mom had my dad eating out of the palm of her hand. No, she didn't even have to do that; she said it and he freaking did it, man. He was whipped, and the only reason the whole village didn't know it was because we weren't about to let anyone know one of the fiercest Vikings in Berk had handed his balls to his wife years ago. My mom can be totally annoying sometimes, but you have to admit, that's pretty badass, especially when you consider how many dragons my dad's killed. I guess my dad must've sensed my train of thought, because just then he said, "Ragnhild, don't give her any ideas."

Too late. I jumped off of Dad's lap and walked over to Mom. "Teach me your ways."

Mom looked all smug while Dad looked panicked. "Ah, Ragnhild, the boys are gonna trip over themselves te get to her in a couple o' years" "

"Yeah right," Tuff snorted from his seat.

I smacked his face into the table.

"And you think you need teachin'," Dad grumbled.

## 12. A Fiendishly Clever Plan

A/N: Fun fact: When your roommate and the guy you've been making out with both have a cold, you will in fact not only get both of their colds, but their colds will also combine into a super-cold that will render you miserable and bedridden. Yeah. FUN TIMES.

So, the kill ring! IT'S HERE! \*jump\* I know some of you guys have been waiting for this for a while, AND NOW YOUR WAITING IS OVER! I have to say, this chapter was hard as fuck to write; I am no good with the climactic action sequences (I don't think many people are, but I am especially not good at them), and writing them from someone else's perspective is HARD, so if this sucks...believe me, I know.

And yes, I quoted the trailer near the end of the chapter.

Huge thanks must go to \*\*TemariTheWolf, musiclover99, Jet Warrior, Irako of the Desert,\*\* and \*\*xv323\*\* for their reviews; you guys are awesome!

Enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>Everyone was totally pumped the next day. Even though killing dragons was kind of our thing, it was a huge deal to watch the top kid in their dragon training class kill the Monstrous Nightmare, especially when that kid was Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III. I'm pretty sure that every Hairy Hooligan showed up; me, Tuff, Snotlout and Fishlegs were really lucky to get a spot at the front where we could see all the action.<p>

"Where's Astrid?" Snotlout kept asking every five minutes, standing on his toes like he was gonna see her braid over everyone's horns.

"Probably sulking that she's not the one in the ring," I finally said, rolling my eyes. "Give her a couple of days and she'll be back to normal."

"You think Hiccup's nervous?" Fishlegs asked. "I mean, the Monstrous Nightmare has a firepower of fifteenâ€"that's pretty high."

"I bet he's totally pumped," Tuffnut said, swinging his fist. "Did you \_see\_ him take down that Gronckle yesterday? The guy's a champ!"

"Shh!" Fishlegs said.

Tuff stared at him. "Legs. Do not \_shush\_ me."

"Stoick's about to make a speech," Fishlegs said, pointing to the platform.

Sure enough, Stoick was waving at everyone in a "simmer down, simmer down" kind of way. "Well, I can show my face in public again!" he boomed, and everyone laughed. He waved his hand for everyone to be quiet. "If someone had told me that in just a few, short weeks, Hiccup would go from, well, being, uhâ€" \_Hiccup\_ to placing \_first\_ in \_dragon training\_, well, I would've tied him to a mast and \_shipped\_ him off for fear he'd gone mad!" Everyone cheered because, well, let's face itâ€"we all knew it was true. "And you know it! But, here we are; and no one's more surprisedâ€"or more proudâ€"than I am. Today, my boy becomes a Viking. Today, he becomes one of us!"

We all cheered again as we watched Stoick step off the platform and make his way to his Throne of Doom.

"Damn; he gives really good speeches," Tuff said.

"Yeah, it's like, a requirement for being chief," Snotlout said.

"I'm fairly certain it's notâ€" "

"Oh, come on, like you know any better, Legs," Snotlout

snapped.

Gobber disappeared through the door under us; a second later, Hiccup came out, fixing his helmet. Everyone went wild; you'd think Humongously Hotshot the Hero had just walked in or something. I let out a really loud cat-call, just so Hiccup would know it was from me, and Tuff shouted, "Yeah! Show 'em how it's done!"

By now, everyone had started this chant of, "HIC-CUP, HIC-CUP, HIC-CUP!" and it didn't sound like it was gonna stop anytime soon. Hiccup headed for the weapons rack; his back was to me, so I couldn't see anything.

"What'd he get?" I asked, craning my neck.

"I saw him get a shield," Tuff said. "But I didn't see his weaponâ€¦"

"I think he got the knife," Fishlegs said, frowning.

"You mean the sword?" Snotlout said in an excited voice. "Awesome, that'll be epic when heâ€¦"

"No, I mean the dagger," Fishlegs corrected.

I whipped my head to look at him and then whipped it back to look at Hiccup. And you knowâ€¦ Fishlegs was right. Hiccup was taking on the biggest dragon in the ring with the tiniest weapon on the rack. "Oh my \_gods\_â€¦"

There was a loud creak as the bars holding the door in place slid backâ€¦one slid up and one slid into the groundâ€¦and then the doors exploded open.

Now, I'd seen Monstrous Nightmares before. Everyone hadâ€¦they'd done more damage than any of the other dragons that attacked the village. But nothing compared to seeing this one. This Nightmare had been caught months ago and had barely moved since then; it had been waiting for this moment for months, and it was gonna put up one Hell of a fight before some measly human took it down. It was huge, bigger than I remembered Nightmares being, and it was covered in flames. It growled and hissed and roared, and before I could get used to the idea of this big-ass dragon covered in fire standing there, it lurched to the side and ran around the ring, hooking its claws in the chains over the top. It was still covered in fire, too, so when it came to us, I screamed and jumped back. It shot off a ball of fire at some Vikings; I found out later that no one had gotten hurt, but I remember thinking that if anyone had been standing there, all that'd be left was a pile of ashes. The Nightmare scampered over the top of the ring, completely upside down, and dropped its head down to look at Hiccup. It dropped down, one claw at a time, and then it started moving in on him. It was his moment to kill the dragon and be a hero.

Now, I had it all worked out. I'd been working up plan after plan to get Hiccup, and so far, nothing had worked, but I finally had a foolproof plan; I knew exactly what I was gonna do. Hiccup was gonna defeat the Monstrous Nightmare, no problem, and the crowd was gonna go wild and surround him, lifting him up on their shoulders while they cheered him on. And then me, Tuff, Snotlout and Fishlegs were

all gonna push to the front because we were his friends, and he would look at us and grin. And then when they finally set him down, I was gonna be right thereâ€”I was gonna throw my arms around his neck and kiss him for all he was worth. And Hiccup, still on an adrenaline rush from killing the dragon, would kiss me back, and he would be mine.

I didn't count on Hiccup dropping his knife and shield and tossing his hat to the ground.

I gasped with everyone else as the metal thunked against the stone ground; even the dragon stopped growling.

"Stop the fight!" Stoick said, and for the first time in my life, I thought he sounded worried. I didn't blame him; Hiccup pulled some crazy stunts, sure, but this was nutty even for him. I felt my hand come up and grab Tuff's shoulder like I always do when I get a little freaked out, and considering that he didn't shrug me off or anything, I'm guessing he was just as freaked as I was.

"No!" Hiccup shouted. "I need you all to see this!" He started reaching his hand towards the Nightmare's snout. "They're not what we think they areâ€”we don't have to kill them."

I felt my mouth falling open. His hand was right there, and the dragon wasn't biting it offâ€”how was this happening?

"I said, stop the fight!" Stoick roared, getting up and banging his hammer on the railing.

You know how when you're being chased or something in a dream and the bad guy or the monster or whatever is about to get you, and nothing seems to move fast enough? Yeah. That's what it felt like when that dragon snapped at Hiccup. I guess the hammer hitting the rail set it off, because it started chasing Hiccup around the ring. I saw it shoot at him and snap its jaws at him (I swear the gods were helping him, because there is no way in Midgard he should've survived all that), but everything seemed to take forever and I felt like I watched Hiccup scramble for his life for hours. Finally the thing pinned Hiccup down with one of its enormous claws and it looked like it was ready to snap him upâ€”and then I heard this high-pitched whistling noise that I knew I'd heard before but couldn't remember where. Something blasted the railing and everything went up in smoke; no one could see what was going on and we had no idea if Hiccup was still alive or not. The four of us ran to the railing and tried to look through the smoke; Snotlout even jumped up onto the first bar to try and get a better look.

And then the Monstrous Nightmare rolled out of the smoke, fighting against something black that was on its back.

"What is that?" Snotlout asked, his eyes bugging out of their sockets.

"It's a dragon," Fishlegs gasped. "Onlyâ€”I've never seen that species before in my lifeâ€”"

The Nightmare bucked the black dragon off of its back; the black dragon rolled to its feet and stood in front of Hiccup with its teeth bared. It was a lot smaller than the Nightmare, but something about



it must have scared the Nightmare, because it backed off real quick. Hiccup jumped up and ran to the black dragon's side—and things were starting to make sense. A bunch of Vikings jumped down into the ring with their weapons and shields; the dragon kicked at a few, sending them flying a few yards, and then it pounced on Stoick.

"No! \_No\_!" Hiccup shouted.

The dragon turned and looked at him; Spitelout used the moment to run and pin down the dragon's head, and then a bunch of other Vikings ran to help him. Astrid, who had come out of \_nowhere\_, had to hold Hiccup back as they led the Nightmare back into its cage.

"Put it with the others!" Stoick snapped.

The Vikings holding down the dragon wrestled him into a spare cage; Stoick grabbed Hiccup's collar and yanked him out of the ring.

Snotlout turned to stare at us. "What the Hel was that?"

\* \* \*

><p>Word spread like dragon-fire over Berk. The dragon was the Night Fury that Hiccup had claimed he'd taken down ten days ago; he'd been keeping it as his pet and learning how to fly it. That explained how he'd been doing so well in dragon-training. It didn't just stop there, though; Hiccup and this dragon had found the dragons' *nest*, which can only be found by a dragon, which would also explain why we've been spending a good three hundred years looking for the damn thing.

So Stoick was taking one final trip to the nest, and he was bringing the dragon and every able-bodied Viking with him. This included both of my parents and my Uncle Bloodnut. They didn't even pretend it was just another quest; everyone knew that they were going to find the nest, and everyone knew that there could be no survivors.

"You be good while I'm away," Dad said while he hugged me. "Both of yeh."

"We will, Dad," I promised.

"Yeah, Dad," Tuff said.

Mom came up and hugged us next. "I love you both—so very much," she sniffled when it was my turn. "I don't think I tell you as much as I should, but I—|I want you to know—|"

"I love you too, Mom," I mumbled.

Dad finally had to pull her off of us and led her to the ship, patting her back.

"You can have my cabin if I die," Uncle Bloodnut told us bluntly. No beating around the bush for him, I see. "Oh, but be careful; I have troll traps set up all over the place. Well, bye!" And he took off for his ship, whistling.

\* \* \*

><p>When the ships started pulling out of the bay, me and Tuff headed for the watch tower. Snotlout and Fishlegs came up a few minutes laterâ€"Fishlegs's eyes were a little red, and I didn't think it was because he'd been Berserking.<p>

"So Hiccup really did catch a Night Fury," Snotlout said, shaking his head. "The one time he wasn't making it upâ€|"

I pushed up my sleeve to my wrist and stared at my dragon tattoo. It looked different now, almost like I'd never seen it before.

"Shit, no wonder he's been doing so good in dragon training," Tuff said. "He's had his own pet to practice on."

"I can't believe he'd betray us like this," Snotlout snorted, shaking his head again. "Especially after his mom was killed by a dragonâ€"some people even think it was a Night Fury."

"No shit."

"I know! What the Hel was he thinking?"

I traced the dragon tattoo. "Wellâ€|"

"What?" Tuff said.

I shook my head. "Nothing."

"No, you were about to say something," Tuff accused. "Say it."

I bit my lip. "It's justâ€|likeâ€|"

"You don't think Hiccup's wrong."

We all turned to look at Fishlegs, who hadn't said anything since he came up to the watchtower. He didn't look like he was mad or like he thought I was a traitor or anything; he just looked kind of sad. I shrugged my shoulders.

Snotlout looked between us for a minute. "Waitâ€|Ruff, you think Hiccup's right? That we should be nice to dragons and, and keep them as our pets?"

"Maybe!" I snapped, feeling my cheeks go red. "I mean, hear me out! Remember Spâ€"the Terrible Terror in the ring? He was just like a kitten once Hiccup got his hands on him!"

"Yeahâ€" Hiccup," Snotlout pointed out. "Hiccup rode a Night Fury and made a Terrible Terror cute, which is, you know, fantastic for him, but c'mon; dragons have been attacking us for three hundred years. You saw that Monstrous Nightmare today; you honestly wanna keep that thing around?"

I bit my lip; he did have a point.

"Perhaps the Monstrous Nightmare wouldn't be the first choice when choosing a pet dragon," Fishlegs spoke up, "but it's not as if it would be impossible to train a dragon."

Tuff frowned. "Explain."

Fishlegs took a deep breath. "Hiccup was able to scare the Hideous Zippleback, remember?"

"That's right; it won't even come out of its cage if it sees him now," I remembered.

"He was also able to take down the Gronckle and the Nadder, although if you'll remember, neither of them had wounds of any kind when we put them back in their cages," Fishlegs went on. "Clearly he used the same method to relax them that he used on the Terrible Terror when Ruffnut wanted to pet it."

"Do I have to spell it out for you?" Snotlout huffed.

"You can spell?" I droned.

Snotlout glared at me. "Hiccup. Hiccup did all those things. Hiccup scared the Zippleback, Hiccup took down the Gronckle and the Nadder, Hiccup used the Terror for show-and-tell, and Hiccup rode the Night Fury. He's different."

"Yeah, butâ€¦if Hiccup can do it, why can't we?" Tuff asked. "I mean, you're right, he is different, and he's always been different, and that's probably why he understands dragons, but maybe if he, like, taught usâ€¦we wouldn't have to fight 'em anymore."

Snotlout looked like someone had slapped him. "Are you serious?"

"C'mon, you cannot say it wouldn't be totally badass to ride a dragon," Tuff said.

Snotlout didn't say anything; he looked like he was thinking it over real hard.

We heard someone running up the steps; a minute later, Astrid appeared with an excited look on her face. There was only one thing at this point that would've made her that happy-lookingâ€¦she must have killed Hiccup. "Hiccup needs our help," she announced.

Oh, gods, she'd killed him and she needed us to bury him.

"With what?" Tuff asked, frowning.

She grinned. "Something crazy."

Definitely burying him.

"There's thisâ€¦this colossal dragon in the dragons' nest," she said, her grin slipping. "It controls the other dragons; that's why they've been attacking us. They don't want to, but thisâ€¦thingâ€¦it makes them take our food or else she'll eat them. Hiccup tried telling Stoick, but he wouldn't listenâ€¦it's about the size of Berk, and it's going to kill our parents if we don't do something."

I blinked. Well, that was unexpected. And a huge relief, because Astrid was too young to go around killing people; she needed to wait a couple years before she started with that. Although I still had no

idea why Astrid Hofferson was backing up Hiccup Haddock, of all people. "Uh, what exactly are we supposed to do?" I asked.

Astrid glanced at me. "Hiccup has something up his sleeveâ€"I'm not sure what, but I know that I trust him." She took a deep breath. "But for it to work, he needs you guysâ€"all of you."

We glanced at each other.

"Well, I'm in," I said. Hiccup was crazy and his plan was probably even crazier, but I knew it was gonna work.

"Me too," Tuffnut piped up. We grinned at each other.

"Sign me up!" Fishlegs agreed.

Snotlout stared at us for a second before grinning. "Well, what're we waiting for? Let's go save Berk!"

We cheered.

"Come on; he's waiting for us in the ring," Astrid said.

### 13. Something Crazy

A/N: Sooooo I kind of forgot this fic existed until I was about to go to bed last night. /is ashamed/ Anyway, um, yeah, life kind of happened. Lots of class-related things are going on, and I recently started dating a guy I've had a huge crush on since April (huge should be taken literally: he is roughly twice my height.), SO YEAH.

A few people commented on the sudden change of heart the teens (Ruff in particular) have, so I'm going to jump up on my soapbox for a minute: Yes, the kids do change their minds rather quickly...but I didn't write it that way. Chris Sanders and Dean DeBlois did. I'm just trying to justify their plot. I've been dropping little Easter eggs all throughout this fic; Ruffnut's attraction to Spike was the main one. If you want to go into even further detail, I personally don't feel that the change of heart was so "sudden" (keep in mind, this is completely my own opinion and I'm not asking anyone at all to subscribe to it; just to remember that this is how I'm writing the story). Astrid had her mind changed when she ride Toothless, obviously, but with Ruffnut and Fishlegs, the seeds of doubt were already planted; Ruffnut saw with Spike that dragons weren't all bad, and though it's never acknowledged, I think it's pretty obvious that Fishlegs is smart enough to figure out the same thing. Tuffnut can be convinced of anything once Ruffnut does it, and Snotlout, being a popular kid, follows the pack mentality. Also I like to believe that deep down, he really is a good guy. So yes. That's just how I fill in the blanks. \*gets off soapbox\*

This chapter will include the following: An obscure quote from Tangled, a roadtrip in which Hiccup and Astrid momentarily act like parents, the game "I Spy", The Song That Gets On Everybody's Nerves, and Snotlout fucking some shit up.

Yep.

In other news, \*\*I am Number 5\*\* directed me to a trailer for "Gift of the Night Fury" and "Book of Dragons", two HTTYD short films that come out on DVD ON NOVEMBER 15th! WE, WE, WE SO EXCITED!

Also, NEW GLEE TONIGHT. EVEN MORE EXCITEMENT.

HUUUUUUGE thanks to \*\*Catnip-Packet, Voldyne, musiclover99, TemariTheWolf, xv323, Darned4AllEternity, Loti-miko, \*\*and \*\*Irako of the Desert\*\* for reviewing; you guys are the best!

Enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>When we got to the ring, Hiccup had his back to us, staring at the cage doors.<p>

"If you're planning on getting eaten," Fishlegs said as we came to a stop, "I'd definitely go with the Gronckle."

Hiccup had the most adorably surprised look on his face.

Tuff ruined the moment by bumping into my backâ€"hard. "You were wise to seek help from the world's most \_deadly\_ \_weapon," he told Hiccup, holding a hand in front of his face.

"Uhâ€|" Hiccup said, looking confused.

"It's me," Tuff explained.

Snotlout grabbed his head and shoved him out of the wayâ€"oh, Hel, no, \_I\_ needed to have a Hiccup Moment! "I \_love\_ this plan!" he pretty much squealed, holding up two fists in excitement.

I shoved Snotlout so that one of his fists smacked into his face and he spun out of the way.

"Iâ€|didn'tâ€|" Hiccup said.

I got right up in his faceâ€"it was now or never. "You're \_crazy\_," I informed him. Then I grinned. "I like that," I said in a sexy whisper.

AND THEN STUPID ASTRID GRABBED MY BRAID AND PULLED ME OUT OF THE WAY.

Seriously, \_way\_ to ruin my moment, Astrid!\_ It's not like it was \_important\_ to me or anything! I was only telling the guy I like THAT I LIKE HIM. BITCH.

"Soâ€|what \_is\_ the plan?" she asked, like she \_hadn't\_ just totally ruined my moment.

I swear to the gods, if she wasn't my best friend, she would so be dead.

Hiccup grinned. "How do you guys feel about dragons?"

"Well, that would depend on their statistics," Fishlegs started to say.

"Wait a secondâ€¦do we get to ride dragons?" Tuff shouted.

My mouth fell open, because HOLY SHIT, THAT WOULD BE TOTALLY AWESOME.

Hiccup's grin got even bigger. "Well, the persuading didn't take as long as I thought it wouldâ€¦"

Me and Tuff whooped and high-fived, because \_hello\_, we were gonna ride \_dragons\_!

"Just one problem," Fishlegs pointed out. "There are six of us and only four dragons that can be ridden."

"I already figured it out," Hiccup said. "Ruffnut and Tuffnut can ride on the Zippleback; one for each head, and I can ride on the Nadder with Astrid until we get to the nest and I can get to Toothless."

"You named a \_Night Furyâ€¦Toothless\_?" Snotlout asked, raising his eyebrows.

Hiccup turned pink. "It's, uhâ€¦it's a long story," he muttered.

"You already picked out our dragons?" I asked.

Hiccup ducked his head. "Yeahâ€¦I matched them on personality. I don't think you guys will be disappointed."

"Who's first?" Astrid asked in this totally bossy voice. Puh. Moment-ruiner.

Hiccup took a deep breath. "The Monstrous Nightmare."

"Sure, let's start with the savage, murderous dragon that \_sets itself on fire\_!" Snotlout squeaked.

"She's not savage; she was scared and aggravated," Hiccup snapped. "Just let me show you what she's like when there aren't a hundred bloodthirsty Vikings egging her on, okay?"

"Okayâ€¦" Snotlout said, but he still looked like he was about to wet himself.

"Astrid, do you mind?"

Astrid pulled on the lever to release the bars and stepped back to stand with us while Hiccup disappeared inside the cage. I could hear the dragon growling and brought my hand up to grip Tuff's shoulder; I heard Hiccup talking gently, and after a minute, the growling stopped.

After a couple minutes, Hiccup backed very slowly out of the cageâ€¦and coming right after him was the Monstrous Nightmare. He kept his hand right over its snout, not quite touching but so close he might as well have been. The Nightmare's breaths were loud, and every few seconds it let out this low, guttural noise, almost like a cat. Hiccup didn't look scared at all.

I let out a breath I didn't even know I'd been holding, shaking my head slowly. "\_Whoa\_", I muttered. Beside me, I could hear Tuff let out a small laugh.

The Nightmare got even closer; after a minute, I could feel one of its breaths blast at my face. I turned to look at Tuff, and his eyes looked just as big as mine; so he'd felt it too. We turned to look back at the Nightmare as Hiccup brought it right up to Snotlout, who kept whimpering like he'd lost a leg or something. Hiccup reached for his arm, but Snotlout wasn't having any of it. "Wait, what are youâ€œ"

"Shh! Relax!" Hiccup hissed as the dragon snorted. He reached for Snotlout's arm again, and this time, Snotlout didn't jerk back. "It's okay. It's okay." He rested Snotlout's hand where his had been just a second ago, right below the horn on the Nightmare's snout, and you know what it did?

It started purring. Like a huge-ass, scaly cat that can set itself on fire. I fell a little bit in love.

Snotlout started laughing all excited, because, I mean, hello, a huge-ass dragon that can set itself on fire was letting him pet it and it was freaking purring, until Hiccup walked away. "Where're you goin'?" he asked, looking more than a little freaked out.

Hiccup reached into the chest of supplies sitting off to the side and pulled out a coil of rope. "You're gonna need something to help you hold on."

I heard some growling behind me and turned around; my mouth fell open when I realized all the dragons had come out of their cages and were staring at us. "Hiccupâ€œ|"

"It's okay," he said, jogging over to the dragons. He reached up to scratch the Gronckle; her eyes rolled and her tongue stuck out. "C'mon, Legs."

"I get the Gronckle?" Fishlegs asked, sounding totally excited to be riding a dragon that looked like a rock. Um, whatever. He ran over and started scratching the Gronckle'sâ€œ|well, I think it was her neck, but honestly, she's just one big blob ofâ€œ|blobbiness to me.

Hiccup brought Astrid over to the Nadder and then turned to me and Tuff. "I thought you guys could share the Zippleback; I'd introduce you, but I don't think he likes me very muchâ€œ|"

"Don't worry, bro, we got it," Tuff said, practically jumping up and down. He ran for the head that shoots sparks, which is of course the cool head, and started scratching its neck; it purred at him.

"No fair, I wanted that one!" I snapped, stamping my foot.

"No way, butt-braids, you can have fart-for-breath," he sniggered.

The other head leaned down and burped gas all over Tuffnut. He yelped and I laughed so hard that I fell on the ground. "Never mind, I want

this one," I decided.

The dragon's head came down so that we were the same height; I reached up to scratch his neck and he purred really loudly. "Aw, you're just a big softie, aren'tcha?" I cooed. He made a noise that I swear sounded like, "Mm-hmm." I stood up, still scratching. "Everyone thinks you're a big scary dragon." I reached around his neck to hug him. "Nobody appreciates you, do they? \_Do they\_?" He made a whiffling noise and shook his head.

"Uh, Ruff? I think someone wants to say hi."

I looked over at Hiccup and squealed. "\_Spike\_!"

Hiccup was holding the Terrible Terror; he stretched his wings and zoomed into my arms when I opened them up. I started scratching the little guy in his favorite places and he started purring like crazy. My head of the Zippleback squawked angrily; I guess he didn't like being ignored. I set Spike on my shoulder and moved to scratch the Zippleback again. "Aw, calm down, ya big baby!" He shot his head up so that I was dangling a pretty good height; I freaked and wrapped my arms and my legs around his neck. "What the Hel was that for?"

Spike, who had flown off my shoulder when the Zippleback decided to take me for a ride, hissed at him, and the Zippleback hissed right back. Great; two guys finally fight over me, and they're green and scaly.

"I was gonna show you guys how to fly next; thanks for being my segue, Ruff," Hiccup said, smirking. My heart was already beating pretty wildly from, you know, being yanked off my feet by a dragon; the fact that Hiccup was smirking all cheekily at me while I probably looked like a total moron didn't help at all. Hiccup turned to the others. "Let's take the dragons outside and we'll take it from there."

I looked at the head and frowned; he didn't look like he was gonna let me down anytime soon. Stupid dragon jealousy. I scooted so that I was at least hanging on right-side-up instead of awkwardly dangling from its side; I pulled myself upright and felt a lot more comfortable and a lot less like I was gonna die. Two horns were sticking out, one on either side, and they were just the perfect distance for me to hold onto; I wrapped my hands around them carefully. I relaxed when he stretched out his neck a little so that I had more room to sit and didn't feel like I was gonna slip off.

"Hey, I wanna try!" Tuff shouted. His head lowered and stretched out its neck; Tuff swung one leg over it and gripped the horns like I was doing. His head lifted up so that we were at the same height; I sniggered when Tuff also had to wrap his legs around the neck so he wouldn't fall off. Then the dragon started walking toward the ramp that the others had gone up and we totally flipped out, because it was moving, and we were on it. Spike sat on my shoulder, and if my head noticed, he didn't do anything; instead, the Zippleback just kept walking up the ramp until we were outside the ring with the others.

Hiccup was helping Snotlout on the Monstrous Nightmare and promising



that no, she wasn't gonna burst into flames while Snotlout was riding her. He rode her just like me and Tuff were riding our Zippleback; sitting on her neck and holding her horns with his legs wrapped around her neck. It took Hiccup \_and\_ Astrid to help Fishlegs on the Gronckle; he kept falling off before they finally realized that they would have to tie him onto the stupid thing. Then Hiccup tied the rope around the Nadder, just under the wings, and he and Astrid climbed on. "Make sure you're holding on tight," he said to all of us. "Don't worry too much about steering; they know the way to the island. And \_be gentle\_ with them. Everybody ready?"

When we all said that yes, we were ready, could we please get going already, Hiccup gave the Nadder's sides a kick and tugged at the rope; it squawked and opened its wings, pushing into the air. Me and Tuff looked at each other and shrugged; we gave the Zippleback's horns a tug. I felt the wings stretching out and opening behind usâ€|

And then we were flying.

I'm not gonna lie, I was freaked out at first; I mean, one minute you're on the ground, and the next, you're, you knowâ€|not. I let out a little scream and gripped the horns even tighter; I felt Spike's claws dig into my shoulder before he let go. I twisted around (but only a little, because I didn't wanna fall off and, like, die), but I couldn't find him. "Spike!"

"He'll be fine," Tuff shouted over the air rushing past us. "He wouldn't be able to keep up with us anyway!"

It was true; we were going pretty fast, and even though Spike could move pretty fast in the ring, I had a feeling that was more of a short-distance thing than for long trips.

"Oh gods, oh gods, oh gods, oh gods," Snotlout was chanting beside me. He looked like he was gonna hurl. On my other side, Tuff looked like he was having the time of his life, and I really didn't blame him; once you got over the idea of being hundreds of feet in the air with nothing but the grace of the gods to protect you if you fell, it was actually totally awesome. I can't really explain it; something about the wind rushing past you and wings beating behind you and moving in time with something that can't speak but still understands you and nothing but air all around youâ€|I dunno. It's pretty cool. Behind me, Fishlegs's Gronckle was buzzing really unsteadily; I wondered if she would even make it to the nest. And in front of me, Astrid was holding onto Hiccup's waist as he led the group. I knew that that technically didn't mean anything, and that it was actually probably more convenient for Hiccup, who was gonna get off the Nadder as soon as he found Toothless, butâ€|well. I mean, come on; this is \_Astrid\_ we're talking about; the hottest girl on the island and the least attainable. Hiccup had been the biggest loser in Berk up until about a week ago; how could he \_not\_ want her?

So you can understand how I'd be more than a little jealous when I saw her holding onto his waist.

"Find a happy place, find a happy place, find a happy placeâ€|"

I turned to Snotlout and smirked. "How ya holdin' up, buddy?"

"FIND A HAPPY PLACE!" he screamed.

"WHOO!" Tuff shouted. "I am Tuffnut, Lord of the Dragons!"

The Zippleback swooped and he nearly fell off.

"How far is it to the nest?" Fishlegs asked nervously as his Gronckle almost dropped again.

"Uh, lemme put it this way: you'll be a lot better at riding your dragons by the end of it," Hiccup shouted back.

Snotlout whimpered.

"We could play a game," Astrid suggested. "Like 'I Spy' or something."

"I'll go first!" Tuff volunteered. "I spy with my little eye something with a fat ass and flat chest."

I was more pissed than scared of falling, so I kicked him in the ribs.

"HALP!" Tuff shrieked.

"No killing each other!" Hiccup shouted.

"She started it!"

"Did not!"

"Did \_too\_"

"Did not, you liar!"

"Say that to my face!"

"You're a lying liar who lies!"

"Well, you're aâ€"

"SHUT UP!" Astrid snapped. "I don't \_care\_ who started it; if I come back there, I'm finishing it!"

We stared at her. Then we stared at each other. Then we stared at her.

No one said anything for a few minutes.

"I spy with my little eye something blue," Fishlegs said quietly.

We got tired of "I Spy" after a while, though, and no one could think of any other games (at least, games that weren't totally lame), so me and Tuff started singing a song we made up when we were nine to get on everybody's nerves. Literally.

"\_I know a song that gets on everybody's nerves, everybody's nerves, everybody's nerves! I know a song that gets on everybody's nerves and this is how it goes!\_"

"Oh, \_gods\_," Astrid groaned.

"\_I know a song that gets on Astrid's nerves, Astrid's nerves, Astrid's nerves! I know a song that gets on Astrid's nerves and this is how it goes!\_"

"This is the song that never ends, isn't it?" Hiccup asked.

"No, silly, this is the song that gets on everybody's nerves; we can sing the song that never ends after this!" I said. Because we did actually invent a song that never ends. It's really fucking annoying if you're not the one singing it.

"\_I know a song that gets on Hiccup's nerves, Hiccup's nerves, Hiccup's nerves! I know a song that gets on Hiccup's nerves and this is how it goes! I know a song that gets on Snotlout's nervesâ€¦\_"

"I will \_kill\_ you!" Snotlout snapped, but we kept singing.

We were halfway through Fishlegs's verse when we saw the wall of smoke up ahead; that shut us up pretty quickly.

"Is that it?" Fishlegs asked.

"That's it," Hiccup said. "The dragons' nest." He turned to look back at us. "Are you guys ready for this?"

"Oh, I'm ready," Tuff said, leaning back all cocky. "You ready, Ruff?"

"Oh, I am \_ready\_," I said, smirking. "Snotlout?"

"LET'S GO FUCK SOME SHIT UP!" he whooped, urging his dragon forward.

We all stared at him for a second before looking at each other.

"Well, sure, let'sâ€¦go do that," Hiccup agreed, shrugging. We urged our dragons forward and disappeared into the smoke.

## 14. Red Death

A/N: Okay, so yes, I know that this chapter is way late, and I am very sorry; aside from my professors deciding to slap a load of tests/projects on all of us before fall break hits, my boyfriend had a family emergency, so I've been spending most of my already limited free time with him. So yeah, I'm sorry this chapter is so late, and I'm sorry it's so ridiculously short; hopefully the next update will be sooner. I also apologize for the very shitty content of this chapter. Because it is shitty. I'm just not good with action sequences, as you are going to see here; I can't write them well. I don't think many people can, but I especially can't. It's also hard writing it from Ruffnut's perspective; whereas the movie had awesome camera angles and a cool soundtrack, I just have Ruffnut, on the ground, sans soundtrack. And I know a bunch of you were excited for the Epic Battle with the Red Death, but...it's probably not going to be that epic. I am not DreamWorks and I am not even going to pretend to be. If, however, you \_do\_ want to read an epic battle, check out

the last chapter of Hitchhups by **\*\*The Antic Repartee\*\*** (btw, is anyone else TOTALLY BUMMED that it's over? Because I am).

I took some liberties with the action; after Ruffnut and Tuffnut antagonize the Red Death, the movie kind of...forgets about them. Which sucks, because I love them. So I gave them a task that shouldn't interfere with the movie.

And yes, I call it the Red Death. In the great conundrum of Green vs. Red, let me remind the readers that there are RED spikes on the dragon, but green is nowhere to be found on it. I know some sources report it as the Green Death, but I will not call it the Green Death when it has no signs of being green. Also because Red Death sounds fucking badass.

Huge, huge, HUGE thanks to **\*\*Catnip-Packet, musiclover99, Voldyne, TemariTheWolf, Annabeth The Unicorn, xv323, Capito Celcior, Irako of the Desert, Darned4AllEternity, \*\*and \*\*Glitterthorn\*\*** for reviewing last chapter; you guys are awesome, sorry for the wait!

Enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>I had absolutely no idea where we were going; Hel, I could barely see the others. It's no wonder only a dragon can find the nest; even though I could only see smoke, they swerved like they were avoiding rocks every now and then.<p>

I knew we were getting close when I heard the loudest roaring I've ever heard in my life; there was no way something like a Monstrous Nightmare or a Night Fury could make a sound like that. Screams and shouts followed not long after; we were almost there. When the smoke cleared, we saw a giant volcano—and next to it was a dragon that was just as big. Astrid wasn't kidding; it was the biggest damn dragon in the world. Of course it was controlling the other dragons; our sheep had to be, like, nibbles for something that size. The Hairy Hooligans were running towards the far side of the island, away from the ships—which, I noticed, the dragon had mostly set on fire. Hiccup led us right up to it; the Nadder shot at the dragon's head before we swerved around it.

"Ruff, Tuff, watch your backs!" Hiccup shouted. I looked behind me and felt my eyes get really big as I realized how close I was to the dragon's teeth. "Move, Fishlegs!"

"Look at us, we're on a dragon!" Tuff shouted to Mom, Dad, and Uncle Bloodnut, who were all standing together and staring at us with open mouths. "We're on dragons, all of us!" He sounded totally stupid, but I couldn't help grinning anyway.

Hiccup led us near the ships; we pulled into a tight circle and hovered as best we could. "Fishlegs, break it down!"

"Okay: heavily-armored skull and tail made for bashing and crushing—steer clear of both! Small eyes, large nostrils; relies on hearing and smell," Fishlegs rattled off.

"Okay; Lout, Legs, hang in his blind spot. Make some noise, keep it confused," Hiccup said. "Ruff, Tuff, find out if it has a shot limit.

Make it mad."

"That's my specialty," I said, smirking. Hello, this was the girl who had just been singing "I Know a Song That Gets on Everybody's Nerves".

"Since when?" Tuff scoffed. "Everyone knows I'm more irritating!" I rolled my eyes; oh, please. "See?" And he rolled his head of the Zippleback upside down and got in my face, making obnoxious gurgling noises. I shoved him.

"Just do what I told you!" Hiccup groaned. "I'll be back as soon as I can!" He and Astrid headed towards the ships to look for Toothless.

"No worries, we got it covered!" Snotlout shouted after them while me and Tuff led the way to the dragon.

"Yeah, whoo!" Fishlegs whooped. He and Snotlout hung back in the dragon's blind spot while me and Tuff flew in front of its face.

"Troll!" Tuff shouted.

"Butt-elf!" I added.

"Bride of Grendel!"

We cackled as we flew away; a second later, I felt a hot blast of air rush past me. "Whooooa!" I shouted as we pulled over and away from the ginormous flames. "Frigg!"

Tuff reached down to pat his neck of the Zippleback. "Good dragon."

I blew out a breath of air. "Well, that was fun."

"Wanna do it again?" Tuff asked.

I grinned. "Aww yeah."

Tuff grinned back and straightened his helmet. I reached down and patted my neck of the Zippleback. "C'mon, fellas." The Zippleback squawked and zoomed towards the dragon. I cupped my hands around my mouth. "Yoohoo!"

"Hey, fart-face!" Tuff shouted. The dragon growled and opened its mouth. "Go!" Tuff said to the Zippleback, and we just barely missed another blast.

Astrid and her Nadder pulled up a minute later. "Hiccup's getting Toothless; he'll be here soon," she said, pushing her fringe out of her eyes. "Is there anything you need me to do?"

I glanced at the dragon; Snotlout and Fishlegs were doing a pretty good job of annoying the hell out of it, and me and Tuff pretty well had checking its shot limit covered, so there wasn't much left to do. "I mean, I guess you could help us find out if it has a shot limit," I said, shrugging. "We could, like, take turns or something."

"Good idea; we could wear it out faster," Astrid said. I hadn't even thought of that, but it totally worked. "Okay, hang on." She turned the Nadder and flew towards the dragon, circling around its head; she swooped low just before it shot at her.

"That's three," Tuff said. "Not counting the damage it did before we showed up. Most dragons have a shot limit ofâ€¦what, six?"

I thought about it for a second. "This thing is huge; its shot limit is probably at least twice as much as a normal dragon."

"Or it doesn't \_have\_ a shot limit," Tuff pointed out.

I chewed the inside of my cheek. "Well, we have to at least wear it out for Hiccup."

Tuff grinned, adjusting his helmet. "Bring it on."

I grinned back at him. We looped-the-loop in front of the dragon, who was pretty pissed off by now; I mean, between Snotlout and Fishlegs banging on their shields right beside its head and me, Tuff, and Astrid flying in front of its face and shouting at it, it was probably going nutsâ€"it was sure roaring like it. We had our closest call yet; I'm pretty sure my hair got a little bit singed or something. We pulled up beside Astrid; I panted, "Your turn."

"I'm gonna check up on Snotlout while I'm at it," she said, totally not looking concerned at \_all\_ that we had just, like, almost died. I looked over at the dragon and saw that Snotlout had \_somehow\_ or other ended up on the dragon's head, hammering at its eyes, while Fishlegs was on the ground with his Gronckle. "I guess I should probably make sure he doesn't get eaten or something."

"Uh, yeah, that might be a good idea," I agreed.

Astrid and her Nadder moved away.

"So that brings us up to six," Tuff said. "If it has a shot limit, we've gotta be close to reaching it."

"If it doesn't kill us first," I grumbled.

"We're Vikings; it's an occupational hazard," Tuff joked.

I rolled my eyes but smiled anyway. Astrid pulled up beside us. "Snotlout's still hanging on; I say we leave him up there until Hiccup gets here." When Tuff opened his mouth to argue, she said, "If we go over there to try and help him, the dragon will probably move its head to attack us and he'll most likely fall off and break his neck; trust me, he's probably safer up there than if we tried to perform a rescue mission."

It was either a very good plan to keep Snotlout alive or a very good plan to get him "accidentally" killed.

"Well, Hiccup better hurry up, then," Tuff huffed, apparently not trusting Astrid. "Where is he, anyway?"

Astrid glanced behind her and then whipped around, her whole face lighting up. "He's up!" Her Nadder swooped forward and we followed

her. "Get Snotlout outta there!"

"I'm on it!" me and Tuff said at the same time. We glared at each other.

"I'm on it first!" Tuff snapped, knocking his head of the Zippleback into mine.

"Hey!" I reached down to shove him.

"I'm ahead of you!" He shoved back.

"Let me drive!" I kicked him in the ribs.

"No, this way!" He tried to lead, but at this point, I think the Zippleback was just doing its own thing.

"Stop it!" I shoved him again.

"Don't push me!"

"I'll knock your teeth out!"

"If you would just listen to meâ€"

Out of nowhere, Snotlout jumped and landed on the Zippleback's back; with a blink, I realized we'd just swooped in over the dragon's head and now the Zippleback was taking us to the ground with all the other Vikings.

"Whoa-ho, I can't believe that worked!" Tuff shouted.

"It's about time!" Snotlout snapped. "Jeesh! I was only up there for ever!"

"Aw, we were comin' for ya, ya big baby," I said, rolling my eyes as the Zippleback touched down. It lowered its heads so that me and Tuff could get off; it felt really weird, walking around on solid ground after being up in the air for so long. I kind've preferred being in the air. Kind'veâ€"okay, I really preferred being in the air; walking kind of sucked in comparison.

There was a high-pitched whistling, and then Gobber shouted, "Night Fury!"

"Get down!" someone else shouted.

Even though we knew Toothless wasn't gonna kill us, we ducked by reflex anyway; old habits die hard and all that. The whistling got louder, and then there was a blast; Astrid's Nadder flew away from the dragon, but she fell off. I grabbed Tuff's shoulder, but Toothless swooped in and caught her; he set her on the ground and shot in the air again. There was another blast, and then the dragon was down. It stretched its huge wings, and then it lifted itself up into the air to chase after Hiccup and Toothless. Tuff grabbed my wrist and pulled me to stand with Astrid, Snotlout and Fishlegs; together, the five of us watched Hiccup and Toothless outrun it. Between all of us cheering and the dragon tearing down rocks left, right, and center while it tried to catch up with Hiccup and Toothless, I knew it had to be getting pissed as Helâ€"that was

probably part of Hiccup's plan.

Suddenly, Toothless swung upward and shot into the sky; I heard a few people behind me gasp. The dragon had trouble keeping up because it was so huge and wasn't built for speed like Night Furies are; it shot at them, but Hiccup and Toothless always just barely managed to avoid it. Then they disappeared into the clouds, and all we could do was listen to the flap of the thing's enormous wings and its loud roars.

There were bright, blue flashes a few minutes later that had to be Toothless. We could hear the other dragon roaring its head off, so Toothless must have been doing some kind of damage. It was like a lightning storm with no rain; dark clouds, loud noises, sudden flashes of light, and no idea when the Hell it was gonna be over. Sometimes we could see the outline of the dragon in the clouds. It wasn't doing a lot of moving around; just hovering in one place, twisting its giant head around.

Then the clouds were a bright orange; the other dragon was spitting out a bunch of fire. The roaring went on for a few more minutes, and suddenly Toothless was shooting out of the clouds, the other dragon falling out of the sky behind him. Its wings were stretched out and these huge holes were growing in them—the pressure was too much for its wings and they were literally ripping apart. It hit the ground head-first and, I kid you not, it exploded; the blast was so hard that I had to grab onto Tuff to keep from being blown away (one of the only things me and Tuff can agree on is that he's heavier than me. Heavier, not stronger). Smoke spread everywhere; I squeezed my eyes shut when I felt it starting to sting. We had to wait for the ashes to settle for a few minutes; it was a pretty big dragon. I was still getting to my feet from where me and Tuff had crouched down when Stoick took off, coughing and shouting, "Hiccup! Hiccup! Son!"

We all walked forward, still trying to see through the thinning smoke—and then I saw why Stoick had stopped shouting. He was kneeling in front of Toothless, who was lying on the ground—and judging from the way Stoick's head was lowered, Hiccup wasn't lying beside Toothless.

I couldn't breathe. Hiccup was dead. And it wasn't just that Stoick had found his body—there was no body. He'd been burned into ashes by the fire—for all I knew, he could've been floating around in the air. I shivered, even though it was still hot from the explosion.

Then, Toothless lifted up one of his wings and Stoick jerked forward. I felt my hand come up and squeeze Tuff's shoulder—so there was a body. Stoick threw off his helmet and pressed his ear to Hiccup's chest, and I squeezed Tuff's shoulder even harder; there was still a chance—|

"He's alive!" Stoick shouted. "You brought him back alive!"

He's alive.

I felt a huge grin stretch over my face. "Yes," I whispered, releasing my death-grip on Tuff's shoulder. Around us, everyone was laughing and cheering, and even though he swears it's not true, I



totally saw Snotlout wipe away a tear. It felt like when we were little and the Elder would tell a story about Humongously Hotshot the Hero, and we would all cheer at the end of the story when Hotshot got rid of the bad guy and saved the princess and all the loose ends were tied up. Gobber stumped over to Stoick; a few minutes later, Stoick stood up and turned around, holding Hiccup in his arms.

I squeezed Tuff's shoulder againâ€”Hiccup was missing his left leg below the knee.

## 15. Changes

A/N: Okay. Long story short: This chapter is very, very late because my computer's hard drive was damaged and I was without a laptop since...Sunday before last. Basically if anyone is genuinely upset about the lateness of this chapter, blame Newegg dot com for getting my address wrong despite me paying extra and verifying my address LIKE THREE TIMES, and UPS for being just general morons. Anyway, I have R2-D2 again, so YAY, update!

So, this is going to be a fast-paced chapter because, well, there's a lot to cover. So if you want to point out to me that this chapter moves quickly...yes, I am aware of this. I've also taken some liberties with the aftermath of the battle with the Green Death; please note that I AM NOT CLAIMING ANY OF THIS IS CANON. This is my version of events, and if you don't like it, go write your own version (and by that I mean write your own version of the movie, not your own version of my fic. Um. Yeah). There's going to be a scene in this chapter...some people might have problems with it. I don't know; maybe you will and maybe you won't. JUST GIVING YOU A HEADS-UP.

The next chapter is the last one; it should be up in a few days.

Also I came up with the name Zigzag; if I see the name show up in a fanfic in the future, especially if it was by someone who read this fic, I won't necessarily bitch you out, but...I will be very suspicious. /end kind-of-but-not-really-disclaimer/

Alsoalso, **\*\*AvannaK\*\*** on deviantArt has a Ruffnut-centric fic up called \_By the Toe\_; it's also the movie through Ruffnut's POV, and it's totally awesome, and also she references AVPS very sneakily, so you should totes go check it out. Also because she's just an amazing writer; remember \_Hitchups\_?

Finally, HYUUUGE thanks to **\*\*musiclover99**, Voldyne, Capito Celcior, TemariTheWolf, Catnip-Packet, Glitterthorn, Annabeth The Unicorn, **\*\*and\*\*** **\*\*Hoprabbit\*\*** for the reviews; seriously, you guys are amazing, and thank you so much for sticking with me!

Enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>Because the Red Death (we didn't call it that until later, though) destroyed all the ships, me, Tuff, Snotlout, Astrid, and Fishlegs had to go back to Berk on our dragons and bring back the only ship leftâ€”but since none of us knew how to sail, we also had to bring along two adults, meaning that those two adults had to ride

dragons.<p>

Uncle Bloodnut was the only one to volunteer. No. Surprise. There. Spitelout finally agreed to go along too, so we loaded Uncle Bloodnut onto our Zippleback and put Spitelout on Astrid's Nadder and set off for Berk.

By sunrise the next morning, everyone had made it home, everybody who hadn't been there found out what'd happened, the Elder announced that Hiccup would be fine, and Mom and Dad said that yes, Spike could sleep in my room, but only if I promised to take care of him.

Hiccup was asleep for about a week. While he was out cold, \_a lot\_ of things changed; for one thing, a lot of the dragons came to Berk. At first, no one was sure what to do with them. They weren't attacking us or taking any of our food unless we gave it to them, so we figured they weren't under the Red Death's curse anymore. And since they weren't evil and they didn't look like they planned on leaving anytime soon, we just shrugged and let them stay. Me, Tuff, Snotlout, Astrid and Fishlegs had been keeping our dragons around our houses; they liked to perch on the rooftops (Toothless, of course, was staying in Hiccup's house). That was how Hoark got the idea; he saw a bunch of Nadders using Bob the Sled's roof for a roost and realized that they were kind of like birdsâ€”so he got a bunch of Vikings together and they put up roosting houses for the dragons. Feeding them was easy; we just used the giant torches and threw cows and sheep and fish and leftovers in there and the dragons ate it right up.

While everyone was busy making Berk dragon-friendly, us teenagers were giving flying lessons. Even though we were the only Vikings so far to have actual pet dragons, Stoick thought it was a good idea if everyone learned how to ride, just in case. It was actually kind of hilarious, teaching a bunch of grownups to ride a dragon and watching them fall off and freak out and kick their Gronckles when the stupid things fell asleep in the middle of a lesson.

At the end of the day (or when we didn't feel like doing any work), me and Tuff would get on our Zippleback and take him for a spin around the island. Flying is the best feeling; nothing compares to it. Sometimes I think I belong up in the air. I know that sounds really stupid; I mean, come on, I was born with two legs, so clearly I was meant for walking. But when I'm up in the airâ€”it's like nothing can get to you up there. You're untouchable. You're so far away from everything; you just wanna stay up there forever. Sometimes you think you can.

We'd just taken off about three days after the fight with the Red Death when Tuff jerked his head at the Zippleback and said, "You ever notice how he kinda zigzags when he moves?"

I blinked; I hadn't really thought about it before, but now that he mentioned itâ€” "Whoa, he totally does."

"It would be a cool name."

I frowned at him. "What would?"

"Zigzag," he said. He pointed to my head and then his. "Zig and Zag when we're talking about different heads, Zigzag when we're talking

about the dragon."

I thought about it for a minute. Itâ€|actually wasn't a bad name at all. In fact, it was pretty clever. I'd been thinking of names for days, from Sparky and Smoky (too corny) to Spitfire (too clichÃ©). Zigzag worked. I reached down to pat my neck of the Zippleback.

"Whaddya think, fellas?"

They squawked and bobbed their heads.

"Zigzag it is!" Tuff whooped.

\* \* \*

><p>When I wasn't teaching flying lessons or sneaking off with Tuff to fly Zigzag or making sure Spike wasn't chewing up my house, I was visiting Hiccup.<p>

Even though he'd lost most of his leg below the knee, the Elder said that the fire had burnt his leg and sealed it up, so he hadn't lost as much blood as he could have; he'd still lost a limb, though, so he would be out for a few days. While he was asleep, Gobber put together a fake leg for him; not just a peg like Gobber's, but a metal one that would hook into the stirrup of Toothless's saddle when they went flying. He also started working on another saddle and replacement fin for Toothless, since his old ones had gotten messed up in the fight with the Red Death. The new fin was totally badass; it was red with a white skull on it, and it would look way awesome when he was flying with it.

A couple times, I was lucky enough to visit Hiccup when no one else was there; people were always coming and going, because everyone wanted to take care of the guy who'd saved Berk. The first time didn't last long; after letting Toothless sniff me and Spike (we just barely passed inspection; most dragons, I've found out, hate Terrible Terrors), I sat in the chair by Hiccup's bed. His hand was just lying thereâ€|I had just reached for it so I could hold his hand like loving wives and girlfriends are supposed to do when their man is unconscious, but just then Tuff and Snotlout burst in and asked if he was awake yet and I didn't get the chance.

The second time wasâ€|a lot different.

Me and Tuff had just finished giving lessons (give me Stoick the Vast, Hoark the Haggard, or Nobber Nobrains any day, but never give me Phlegma the Fierce as a student ever again) and so had Snotlout, but Astrid and Fishlegs were still giving theirs; so while Tuff and Snotlout went off to the springs, I went to go visit Hiccup. I knocked on the door as I pushed it open and said, "Hello?"

Toothless ran up to me and sniffed me all over like a dog or something; I didn't mind, though, because honestly, he's one of the most adorable dragons I've ever seen (nothing is more adorable than Spike, though). When he apparently decided that it was okay for me to come in, I sat down in the chair by Hiccup's bed againâ€|only that got kind of boring after a few minutes. Don't get me wrong, it's not that I wanted to get away from him or anything; I am fully committed to staying by my man's side. Even if, you know, Hiccup wasn't technicallyâ€|or even kind ofâ€|my man. But when a guy is unconscious and the only person you have for company is his dragon, well, what

are you supposed to do?

I looked around, but of course nobody was there except for Toothless. I sat down on the bed and held my breath, but nothing happened. I looked at Toothless again; he just tilted his head, so I turned back to Hiccup. He looked so peaceful—he definitely deserved it after everything he went through. Gods, he had almost died. And for us. For a bunch of people who had been mean to him his entire life. What did he owe us? I reached forward to push his bangs off his forehead—this crazy tingle went through my fingers and all the way to my spine, and I felt my heart do that stupid flip-flop thing again. I'd never been this close to him before. I sucked in a breath—I was close enough to count his freckles if I wanted to. I probably could've, too. But I didn't. Instead, I did something really stupid.

Hiccup had four scratches on his face from his fight with the Red Death—one on his forehead, one on his nose, one on his right cheek, and then one on his left jaw. I don't even know what the Hell I was thinking—I wasn't, I guess. I leaned forward and kissed the scratch on his forehead. I just wanted to. And his skin was so warm and soft and it felt so good that I didn't want to stop, so I kissed the scratch on his nose and I felt his breath tickle my chin. But that wasn't enough, so I kissed the scratch on his jaw and then the one on his cheek, and then I kissed that tiny scar on his chin you can only see up close, just because it was there. And then I did the stupidest thing I could possibly do:

I kissed him on the mouth.

Oh gods, I don't know why. I wish I did. I just know that I wanted to. I knew he wasn't gonna kiss back or anything, but—|gods. I'm such an idiot. It was stupid, and I knew it was stupid for several reasons. It was stupid because anyone could've walked in. It was stupid because he could've woken up. But mostly, it was stupid because it made me fall that much more in love with him, and now there was just no way in Valhalla I could get out of it.

There was a noise from the side, and I gasped and sat up straight. My head whipped to the side and my eyes locked with Toothless's. He had seen the whole thing, and now he was giving me this look like what in Thor's name are you doing? I jumped to my feet and bumped into the chair, sending it skidding back. "Don't tell him," I blurted.

Toothless just stared.

I tore out of there and didn't look back.

\* \* \*

><p>Hiccup woke up the next day.<p>

Me and Tuff were finishing up a lesson when Snotlout and Fishlegs came to get us and tell us the news. When our dragons landed, Hiccup was attaching the new fin to Toothless's tail while Astrid watched. He acted completely normal; you'd never know he had just battled the biggest dragon in the world a few days ago. I mean, I don't really know how someone who just killed the biggest dragon in the world actually acts, but not like Hiccup. Snotlout stomped up to him and

hugged him so hard that he lifted him off the ground.

"Gah!" Hiccup shouted, his eyes getting really big. "It's great to see you too, Loutâ€"can I breathe now?"

"Missed you, man," Snotlout said in a really gruff voice. When he pulled away, I swear he wiped away a tear. Seriously, sometimes I worry about that guy.

Then Tuff shoved Fishlegs out of the way and pinned down Hiccup's arms so he could give him a noogie. "Welcome back, dude!"

"Mmph," Hiccup managed.

Tuff let him up after a minute. I felt my heart do that stupid flip-flop thing again and threw my arms around Hiccup so that he couldn't see how red my face was getting. Only then I realized he could probably feel my heart pounding against his shoulder, so I pulled back and smiled, only not in an I-have-an-insane-crush-on-you-way, but in an our-relationship-is-purely-platonic-way. At least, I hope that's what it looked like. "Good to have you back, Haddock."

"Thanks, Ruff," Hiccup started to say, but just then Fishlegs let out a sob and crushed him in a hug. "Oh dearâ€"|" Hiccup grunted, patting Fishlegs's back. Well, as much of his back as he could reach.

"You survived!" Fishlegs blubbered.

"Ah, well, it would appear that way," Hiccup said, still awkwardly patting Fishlegs's back.

"Group hug!" Tuff shouted.

"No, thank youâ€"|" Hiccup tried to say, but the five of us crowded in around him and squeezed each other until we couldn't tell whose arm was around who. Even Toothless joined in, wrapping his huge leathery wings around us and warbling while we all snorted with laughter. Hiccup finally told us that someone was crushing his ribcage and Astrid called him a wimp, but we decided we should probably let him go in case he passed out or something; after all, the guy had just woken up after sleeping for almost a week.

It took a few minutes for us all to get untangled (literallyâ€"Tuff's hair was somehow knotted in one of my braids. I tell him to take better care of himself, but does he listen? Noooo); when we did, Snotlout threw an arm around Hiccup's shoulder and asked, "So how's the leg?" Way to be subtle, Lout.

Hiccup didn't really seem bothered by it, though; he shrugged and said, "It's gonna take some getting used to, but it's not bad."

"Have you tried flying with it yet?" Fishlegs asked.

Hiccup shook his head. "No, but we were just about to take it for a test drive."

"We should all go!" Astrid said.

Of course everyone was all for it, because the last time we'd seen Hiccup and Toothless in action was almost a week ago, and we'd been on the ground while they were way up in the clouds; if the others were like me, they were dying to see Hiccup and Toothless work up close. So we helped Hiccup finish fitting Toothless's riding gear on, and then everyone climbed on their dragons. Toothless kind of scrunched up a little bit, and then he and Hiccup took off. We all took off after them, but it was a while before anyone caught up; they might've been out of commission for a week, but they still flew better than any of us. We circled the island once and then flew over the Little Isles; Hiccup and Toothless headed for one of them and we all followed.

"How's your leg?" Astrid asked all bossily while we climbed off.

Hiccup glanced down at it. "Great; actually, I kind of forgot it was there. Er, forgot it \_wasn't\_ there, I meanâ€¦ "

"Gobber rigged it so your leg just clicks into place, right?" Fishlegs asked, leaning forward to look at Toothless's saddle.

"Yeah, how \_does\_ that work?" Snotlout asked, also leaning forward. "Doesn't your leg have to change positions to adjust Toothless's tailfin or whatever?"

"Yeah, well, it's actually a pretty basic design, although I'm thinking of expounding on itâ€¦" Hiccup said as he and Tuff leaned in.

I started to look at the saddle too, but Astrid grabbed my arm and yanked me away from the guys (who were too busy talking about mechanical stuff to notice) until we couldn't hear them anymore. I raised my eyebrows at her. "Uh, yes?"

She smiled. "Sorry; I just didn't want the boys overhearing." She flipped her fringe out of her eyes. "I need to tell you something."

"Really?" I droned. There were only so many reasons someone would pull you out of earshot.

She didn't even look annoyed that I was being sarcastic. In one breath, she blurted out, "I kissed Hiccup."

You know how sometimes you hear something, but it doesn't really click until a minute later? Yeah. That's what happened. I felt this moment of confusion, wondering why she was smiling so big, and then it kind of hit me and I felt my stomach fill up and my heart kind of got stuck in my throat and all I could think of was how yesterday, \_I'd\_ kissed Hiccup.

"Ruff?" she asked. Her voice sounded like she was talking to me underwater.

"When?" I asked her, clearing my throat when I heard how hoarse it sounded.

She blushed and it was soâ€¦so \_girly\_ that I almost thought a troll

had replaced her with a changeling overnight or something. "Today. I mean, I kind of did it in front of the entire village, so you would've heard about it sooner or later, but I wanted to tell you before you got it from anyone else."

I swallowed and tried to force my heart back into my chest where it belonged. "Oh. Wellâ€¦thanks, I guess."

Astrid wasn't smiling anymore. "You okay?" she asked all concerned.

I shook my head and forced a smile. "Yeah, fine, justâ€¦never thought I'd see the day when Astrid Hofferson kissed Hiccup Haddock, y'know?"

She smiled again. "I know what you mean."

I cleared my throat again. "So, is anything, like, official?"

She glanced at the guys, who had moved onto Toothless's tailfin now. "I don't knowâ€¦I mean, we haven't really had a chance to talk about itâ€¦but I have a pretty good feeling about things."

My heart got stuck in my throat again. Of \_course\_ Astrid had a pretty good feeling about things; she was \_Astrid\_, and she'd just kissed \_Hiccup\_. He'd be crazy (and not the adorable brand of Hiccup!crazy but legit whacko) to turn her downâ€¦any guy would. I didn't have a mosquito's chance in a rainstorm.

## 16. Ruffnut Out

A/N: HEY GUYZ, LOOK HOW QUICKLY I UPDATED. No, it's not the end of the world; just the end of this fic. \*sniffle\* Seriously, though, guys...I cannot believe I am ending this thing. I started this a few months shy of a year ago, and now...it's over. Wut. I still remember seeing the trailer for HTTYD and at the part when Ruffnut gets in Hiccup's face and says, "You're crazy!...I like that," I thought, "Well, even if the movie sucks, I'm gonna like that girl." And I was so right. I saw the movie with my two best friends in the world at our school's movie theater, and I just fell in love. Not just with Ruffnut, but with the whole world of Berk. How can you not?

I wrote this fic because I love Ruffnut, and I felt like she got brushed off much too easily in the movie. It's clear she likes Hiccup, and even if her line about liking him because he's crazy was just for comedic purposes (although if you've made it this far into the fic, you can see I believe otherwise, lol), you can't argue that she got the shaft. So that's why I wrote this; to say that no, it isn't okay that she had to watch her best friend get the guy she wanted...but you know what? That's okay. She's a Viking. She's gonna get over it. Because when you're fourteen, you aren't always gonna get the guy or girl that you want. This is real life, and in real life, we \_don't\_ \_always\_ get what we want. In fact, we \_rarely\_ get what we want, and I'm not gonna be one of those authors that lies and says we do. That...sounded really harsh and soapbox-y, which was not how I wanted it to sound...um. Basically what I'm trying to say is that things don't always work out the way we want them to, and that's okay.

If, however, the ending of this fic really and truly bothers you, do keep in mind that I write quite a bit of Ruffcup, because they are my OTP; you can check out I'm Gleeking Out and/or This is Berk if the idea of Hiccrd and/or Rufflegs distresses you as much as it does me.

Finally, I want to give huge, huge, huge, huge, HUGE thanks to everyone who reviewed: \*\*Ninja Kangaroo, Raee, MWA220, BlindMaster, RockstarVikingAngel, ichthyosaurus, Darned4AllEternity, Hicc, xv323, u r awesome, 123NinjaKat\*\* (I miss your reviews, girl :())\*\*, Catnip-Packet, Bookworm181, TemariTheWolf, draco-x, ShadowOne, 4ever2010, Annabeth The Unicorn, LeDragonQuiMangeDuPoisson, Voldyne, JustBlossom, Irako of the Desert, almne, musiclover99, Huynh D, BlackShadowedMoon, Jet Warrior, Loti-miko, Capito Celcior, Glitterthorn, Hoprabbit,\*\* \*\*Zero Reader,\*\* and anyone else who may come along after this chapter. Thank you all for your encouragement; you don't know how many times I was in a bad mood and you just brightened my day. Seriously. Thank you guys for everything.

And now for the final chapter. For the last time: enjoy!

\* \* \*

><p>We had dinner at Mead Hall that night, but I left early because "I was feeling kinda sick". It was mostly true; everytime I saw Astrid and Hiccup looking at each other and flirting with each other, I felt like I was gonna hurl. It's totally bad enough to watch the guy you're secretly in love with flirt with his new girlfriend, but when his new girlfriend is your best friendâ€|that shit is not cool. I didn't feel like going into my actual house, though, because my parents would just want to talk to me, and I was <em>not<em> in the mood to talk. So I sat outside and scratched Zigzag and Spike; at least there were still a few males who appreciated me.

Tuff came home a while later; before he even sat down, he said, "Did you know that Astrid kissedâ€|"

"Hiccup? Yeah, she told me," I droned. Thank you, Tuffnut, that was exactly what I wanted to talk about. Not.

Tuff plonked onto the grass beside me. "So, are they, likeâ€|?"

I shrugged. "Probably. She wasn't sure, but she seems into him, and he's obviously had a thing for her for years, soâ€|"

Tuff watched me. "Are you gonna do anything about it?"

I snorted. "Like what? Try to break them up? She likes him, he likes her; even if I was able to get between them, they'd still like each other, and we all know Hiccup's never gonna go for me while Astrid's around, and then everyone would be miserable. It's just easier this way."

Tuff had to think about this for a minute. I'd been thinking about it all day. Finally he said, "That kinda sucks for you."

No shit. But I shrugged again. "I'll get over it. I'm a total sexpot; I can have anyone I want." Except the only guy I wanted, apparently.



Tuff snorted but didn't say anything. He started scratching Zag under the chin; after a long time, he said, "Astrid's kind of ugly."

I know he was just saying that to be, like, \_comforting\_ or whatever (because let's face it: Astrid? Is totally hot), and I wasn't exactly \_mad\_ at Astrid, but I'm not gonna lie: I felt a little better inside when he said that. I nudged him with my shoulder. "Thanks," I mumbled.

He nudged me back. "Anytime," he mumbled back.

Viking bonding, yo.

\* \* \*

><p>There was a party at Mead Hall the next night to celebrate Hiccup's victory over the Red Death, and even though I was still feeling kinda shitty, I figured I'd feel better if I drank. Plus my brother is totally hilarious when he's wasted, and I never pass up the chance to watch him make an idiot out of himself. Like he needs to be drunk to do <em>that<em>.

I felt better after a cup of ale, courtesy of Uncle Bloodnut, and I was working on a tankard of mead and watching Tuff and Snotlout fight over who could hold their drink better (Tuff could yap all he wanted to; he always passes out before Lout) when Hiccup came up to me.

"Hey, uh, Ruffnut, how's it going?" he asked. He kept moving his hands from his hips and then folding them over his chest and then dropping them like he couldn't figure out what to do with them. If he wasn't so busy trying to figure out what to do with his hands, he would've seen that mine were turning white because they were gripping my tankard so hard.

"Pretty good," I said, clearing my throat. Gods, why is my voice so \_gross\_?

"That's good." He looked at something in the crowd and licked his lips. "So, I guess Astrid's told you already thatâ€¦you knowâ€¦sheâ€¦Iâ€¦weâ€¦"

Ugh. I tried not to look as grossed out as I felt. "Yeah, she told me."

"Yeah, I figured." Hiccup looked seriously freaked out; he kept shifting his weight from foot toâ€¦peg?...and looking around like he was afraid someone was after him. "Well, uh, since you're, you know, her best friend, I was wondering if, you know, you just happened to know if, uh, er, well, that isâ€¦I mean, the thing isâ€¦"

I felt embarrassed \_for\_ him. "Spit it out."

He turned red. "I really like her," he blurted. "But I wanna know ifâ€¦if I shouldâ€¦you knowâ€¦ask her out." He gulped.

I stared at him. "Why \_wouldn't\_ you ask her out?" Hello, he'd just saved the entire village, and that included Astrid's life. Even if she wasn't into him (and it was pretty obvious she was), she \_owed\_ him a date.

He turned even redder. "Well, I mean, there is the distinct possibility that, you know, she might not exactly reciprocate my, er, feelings"

Well, didn't \_this\_ story sound familiar? I let out a huge breath and set down my tankard on the table behind me. "Look, Hiccup, I'm gonna tell you this from personal experience: don't wait around to ask out the person you like, because they won't be single forever, and you could miss your chance. If you like her, \_go for her\_. What's the worst that could happen?"

"Dismemberment"

"She'll say no," I cut across him. "Hiccup, she likes you; a lot. I really don't think she's gonna turn you down." It wasn't weird enough that I had two pet dragons, no; now I was giving the love of my life dating advice so he could get my best friend.

Hiccup smiled at me. "Thanks, Ruff. You're a good friend."

"Fuck yes I am," I muttered, taking a huge swig from my tankard.

"And, look, I don't know who got away from you," he said, rubbing the back of his neck, "but he doesn't know what he's missing out on."

I actually felt myself laughing"oh, irony. "Thanks, Hiccup." I sighed and jerked my head towards the crowd. "Now go get her."

Hiccup took a deep breath and disappeared into the crowd. I sighed again and leaned against the table.

My name is Ruffnut Thorston, and my life is not fair.

\* \* \*

><p>I'm pretty sure that stories"unless they're told by Gobber"are supposed to have a moral. I guess I don't really know what the moral of my story is. lame, right? I guess it's something like"don't be afraid to be yourself, or something sappy like that. Even though that's totally wrong, because what if you're really weird and you act like yourself? Then you would have no friends and the chief would have to tie you to a mast and send you out to sea because everyone thought you were crazy or something. So no, being yourself isn't always, like, the best advice.<p>

Althoughmaybe if I'd let Hiccup know I liked him instead of pretending I didn'tmaybe I'd have him instead of Astrid. Maybe we both would've found Toothless and learned to fly him together. Maybe we could've convinced everyone that dragons aren't so bad, that they were attacking us to survive. Maybe we could've taken down the Red Death a lot easier. Maybe Hiccup wouldn't have lost his leg.

Maybe he'd be mine.

But I guess that there is one thing I learned, and that's to stop thinking about the past. What happened, happened. Maybe it didn't

happen the way you wanted it to, but moping about it won't help you; you just have to keep going and hope that there are better things waiting for you around the corner. Maybe there are. Maybe there aren't. But you're not gonna know unless you go for it.

Damn. I'm deep.

Anyway, that's my story. I hope you got something out of it, or at least found something to keep you busy on a rainy day. Mostly I hope you don't make the same mistake I made, because it will be a long time before you stop regretting it.

Ruffnut out, bitches.

End  
file.